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LINCOLN AND STANTON

A STUDY OF THE WAR ADMINISTRATION OF 1861 AND 1862, WITH
SPECIAL CONSIDERATION OF SOME RECENT STATEMENTS OF

GEN. GEO. B. McCLELLAN

BY

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LINCOLN AND STANTON.

PART I.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN and Edwin M. Stanton are dead. No member of Mr. Lincoln's Cabinet during the Peninsular campaign is now living. The Hon. Benjamin F. Wade and Andrew Johnson, then U. S. Senators and members of the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War, are voiceless as these their illustrious colaborers.

Emboldened by the ravages death has made during nearly a quarter of a century, George B. McClellan avails himself of the pages of the *Century* to present his explanation of the failure of the Army of the Potomac, while under his command. The initial article, which appeared in the May number, is an unjustifiable assault upon the memories of Lincoln and Stanton, and but for this fact would not deserve notice, as it can have no historic value. As to the details of the Peninsular campaign it furnishes no allegation of fact with which the author's reports, memoranda, and correspondence have not made the country familiar. The statements by which he attempts to make good his assaults upon the memory of the illustrious dead are sustained solely by his word, and would vanish before a freshman's applications of the primary

canons of criticism. He offers no summary of results achieved by the army under his command, and the few positive assertions upon which he ventures conflict with each other. He speaks of beliefs and impressions as to malign influences which rendered it impossible for him to execute his oft abandoned intentions, and in this connection, says: "The more serious difficulties of my position began with Mr. Stanton's accession to the War Office * * * The impatience of the Executive immediately became extreme, *and I can attribute it only to the influence of the new Secretary*, who did many things to break up the free and confidential intercourse that had heretofore existed between the President and myself * * * The positive order of the President, *probably issued under the pressure of the Secretary of War*, forced me to undertake the opening of the railroad."

This is such stuff as dreams are made of. It serves, however, to illustrate the confusion into which the author's morbid imagination led him when in pursuit of an evil genius upon whom to devolve the consequences of his failures.

Again, he says: "In July, 1861, after having secured solidly for the Union that part of West Virginia north of the Kanawha and west of the mountains, I was suddenly called to Washington on the day succeeding the first battle of Bull Run."

From this paragraph readers will conclude that the writer was called to Washington to assume command of the armies, because he had "secured solidly for the Union" that portion of Western Virginia of which he gives the boundaries. This was not the case. The forces under his command in West Virginia had achieved victories for which the President and loyal people were

grateful though they were not of a decisive character, and much fighting was yet to be done before the territory referred to should be secured to the Union. In intimating that his advancement was due to so doubtful and meretricious a claim General McClellan does injustice to himself. His summons to Washington was due to influences much more complimentary to him. His call was a tribute to his pre-eminent skill as an organizer, and his capacity as an engineer.

Lieut.-General Scott recognized these qualities in McClellan, and impressed his sense of their value upon the President as reasons why he should be brought to Washington at a time when immense bodies of fresh troops were to be received, for whom camps were to be selected, and for whose training and practice, as well as a measure of defence to the city, fortifications were to be located, planned, and constructed. It was in view of this combination of facts that Scott recommended the organization of a district to be known as the Division of the Potomac, which should embrace the troops in and around Washington, and that McClellan should be brought to the capital to organize and command this new and important division.

Though General McClellan knew that his advancement had been promoted by the Lieutenant-General, he entered upon his new duties with a studied course of insubordination. By his contumelious treatment of that venerable soldier he had, by the 9th of August, a period of less than a fortnight, reduced him to a condition in which the preferable alternative was to ask the President to allow him to be placed on the officers' retired list. The letter in which he made this request bore date August 9, 1861. As further efforts at direct communication with his sub-

ordinate were incompatible with self-respect, it was addressed to the Secretary of War, and said: "I received yesterday, from Major-General McClellan, a letter of that date, to which I design this as my only reply."¹

President Lincoln could not consent to the retirement of Scott under such circumstances without an effort, on his part, to save the old soldier's feelings. The effort was, however, not destined to succeed, for, while they were yet together, the General received a fresh indignity from his aspiring subordinate, and, in a letter addressed to the Secretary on the 12th, insisting upon his request to be retired, he said:

"On the 10th inst. I was kindly requested, by the President, to withdraw my letter to you of the 9th, in reply to one I had received from Major-General McClellan of the day before; the President, at the same time, showing me a letter to him from General McClellan, in which, at the instance of the President, he offered to withdraw the original letter on which I had animadverted. * * * It would be as idle for me, as it would be against the dignity of my years, to be filing daily complaints against an ambitious junior who * * * has unquestionably very high qualifications for military command."²

The President could not refuse to grant Scott's request when thus repeated and enforced. The order of retirement was made, and McClellan found himself without a military superior other than the President, whom the Constitution named as Commander-in-Chief of the Armies and Navies of the United States, and brief time served to show that restraints imposed or duties demanded by the President were as irksome and irritating to him as had been the consciousness of Scott's superior rank.

¹ "Official Records, War of the Rebellion," Vol. XI., Part III., p. 4.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 5 and 6.

He soon permitted himself to be recognized as the head of the party of inaction, and to be surrounded by the leaders of the reactionary political faction of the North. To avoid misinterpretation and misrepresentation, I pause to say that I allude to no Democrat who believed, as Jackson had done, that the Union was a blessing worth preserving, when I refer to the leaders of the reactionary force of that day. They were Northern pro-slavery disunionists who preferred the destruction of the Union to the destruction of slavery, of whom Clement L. Vallandigham was a brilliant type. They sought the advantages of union and organization, and established secret orders—such as the “Knights of the Golden Circle”; and when addressing meetings of illiterate men in opposition to the enforcement of the draft, to the suspension of the habeas corpus, to the enlistment of colored troops in the army, or to any other vital measures, not infrequently spoke of President Lincoln as a “Mulatto Buffoon.” In their familiar parlance, those who supported the administration in its efforts to save the country, were characterized as “Black Republican Disunionists” and “Nigger Lovers,” and, if they wore the national uniform, as “Lincoln’s Hirelings.”

But for the instant, earnest, and persistent co-operation of national Democrats, the government could not, I believe, have crushed the rebellion and restored the Union. Dix and Stanton were Democrats who had served till the close of Buchanan’s administration in his Cabinet; Morton, of Indiana, and Tod and Brough, of Ohio, who were distinguished for courage and energy among the illustrious group of war governors, had been life-long Democrats, and I might add the names of hundreds of Democrats of State or national reputation who

promptly sought service in the Union army. But the highest enthusiasm for the national cause was exhibited by the rank and file who, ignoring party names or distinctions, with the jubilant shout: "We are coming, Father Abraham, three hundred thousand more," swarmed into the Union camps of every State, and illustrated the popular devotion to country and flag by compelling the President to accept the services of tens of thousands of men for whom he had not called, but whose services would evidently be needed. Yet the head-quarters of the General-in-Chief soon became a rendezvous for the master spirits of the reactionary force. Here frequent conferences were held, in which Messrs. Vallandigham and George H. Pendleton, of the House, and Senators Milton S. Latham and Henry M. Rice were conspicuous. These meetings were characterized by a prominent Democrat, who revolted from their objects, as a "continuing caucus for the consideration of plans of resistance to all measures which proposed to strengthen the army or the navy; to provide means for their pay, sustenance, the munitions of war, and means of transportation; and to devise means of embarrassing the government by constitutional quibbles and legal subtleties."¹ It was here, so it was then said, that Vallandigham was inspired to take such a course with reference to the surrender, by the Administration, of Mason and Slidell as might result in war with Great Britain. Here, too, a preliminary draft of the resolution of Mr. Pendleton, which declared that Congress alone has the power, under the Constitution of the United States, to suspend the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus, was said to have been discussed; and here assembled for consultation the men who arranged the working details of a scheme

¹ Moses F. Odell, of N. Y.

which, having received the sanction of McClellan and the endorsement of an apparent majority of division commanders, would, they believed, compel the President to surrender his well-digested plan of approaching Richmond, and accept one of the difficulties of which, as experience proved, the General-in-Chief had no conception, and which, but for what I cannot help regarding as a providential interposition, the unexpected appearance of Ericsson's monitor, would have destroyed the Army of the Potomac and cost us from fifty to eighty thousand men with their supplies and munitions of war, including horses for artillery and cavalry.

Here, too, at the head-quarters of the General-in-Chief, indignities as gross, if not more gross, than those which drove General Scott into retirement, were flagrantly inflicted upon the President of the United States.

Among General Scott's complaints was that his subordinate refused to confer with him; and when the President, impelled by anxiety for the country, waived questions of official etiquette and proceeded to head-quarters, the announcement of his presence was more than once greeted with boisterous and derisive laughter, evidently intended for his ears; and there was one occasion when it was more than whispered by those immediately about the President, that he was made to wait nearly an hour while men who denied the right of the government to maintain the Union by force of arms engaged McClellan's attention; and when at his own good time the General concluded to see his Commander-in-Chief, his departing guests visibly sneered at that officer as they passed the door of the cold chamber in which he had been so long imprisoned. That was, I believe, the last time President Lincoln sought an interview with McClellan in his head-

quarters at Washington. He did, however, visit him at those of the Army of the Potomac, in camp near Harrison's Landing, July 8, 1862, in the season of that army's profoundest humiliation.

If, as General McClellan asserts, it was after Mr. Stanton's accession to the War Office that the impatience of the Executive became extreme, history will ascribe the impatience not to the words or deeds of Edwin M. Stanton, but to those of George B. McClellan and his chosen companions. The people had been told by the General that the military action of the government should be "prompt and irresistible," that "we should crush the rebellion at one blow, and terminate the war in one campaign." It is true that his inspiring rhetoric was addressed to the Executive, but ours is a popular government, and it reached the people and excited expectations which he would not permit his magnificent army to fulfil.

In a memorandum addressed to the President on the 4th of August, 1861, he said :

"The object of the present war differs from those in which nations are usually engaged mainly in this : that the purpose of ordinary war is to conquer a peace and make a treaty on advantageous terms. In this contest it has become necessary to crush a population sufficiently numerous, intelligent, and warlike to constitute a nation. We have not only to defeat their armed and organized forces in the field, but to display such an overwhelming strength as will convince all our antagonists, especially those of the governing aristocratic classes, of the utter impossibility of resistance. * * * The authority of the government must be supported by overwhelming physical force. Our foreign relations and financial credit also imperatively demand that the military action of the government should be prompt and irresistible." * * *

"The force I have recommended is large ; the expense is great. It is possible that a smaller force might accomplish the object in view, but I understand it to be the purpose of this great nation to re-establish the power of its government, and restore peace to its citizens in the shortest possible time. The question to be decided is simply this : Shall we crush the rebellion at one blow, terminate the war in one campaign, or shall we leave it as a legacy for our descendants ?"¹

After nearly three months of inactivity during which the enthusiasm of the troops was sinking under the dreary monotony of camp life, the impatience of the people became so vociferous as to require to be allayed. McClellan could not ignore the popular impulse, and in the course of a communication addressed to Secretary Cameron in the latter part of October, said :

"So much time has passed, and the winter is approaching so rapidly, that but two courses are left to the Government, viz. : either to go into winter quarters, or to assume the offensive with forces greatly inferior in numbers to the army I regarded as desirable and necessary. * * * The nation feels, and I share that feeling, that the Army of the Potomac holds the fate of the country in its hands. All the information we have from spies, prisoners, etc., agrees in showing that the enemy have a force on the Potomac not less than 150,000 strong, well-drilled, and equipped, ably commanded and strongly intrenched."² * * * I have thus indicated in a general manner the objects to be accomplished and the means by which we may gain our ends. A vigorous employment of these means will, in my opinion, enable the Army of the Potomac to assume successfully this season the offensive

¹ "Records, War of the Rebellion," Vol. V., Series I., pp. 6 and 8.

² Such stories were intrinsically improbable, and the Confederate records show incontestably that the enemy *never* had 150,000 men in Northern Virginia, and that their army had not at that time been strongly intrenched.

operations which, ever since entering upon the command, it has been my anxious desire and diligent effort to prepare for and prosecute. The advance should not be postponed beyond the 25th of November if possible to avoid it."¹

The impatience of the President needed no other stimulant than General McClellan gave it by his spirited suggestion of the early application of force coupled with his persistent inaction. The summer and autumn months, including December, were exceptionally fine. They were bright, dry, and of moderate temperature. I will not say the season was in these respects without parallel, but I can say that for a succession of months it was peculiarly, well adapted to the organization of camps of instruction and to the movement of large bodies of troops of all arms. It was not until the latter days of the last week of December that rain set in. Of one morning just before the Christmas of 1861, I have recollections as distinct as those of yesterday. Hon. Charles Sumner and I walked from near the Treasury building to the Capitol, each carrying a light overcoat upon his arm. Our topics of conversation were the inaction of McClellan, the indulgence extended to him by the Administration, and whether in permitting such a succession of months of fine weather to be wasted in inaction we were not sinning away the country's day of grace.

As yet Stanton was but a private citizen and could not have disturbed the harmony between the President and General McClellan. Yet it was disturbed, and the country rang with the impatient cry of "On to Richmond!" and the Executive and the General were satirized anew each morning by the telegraphic announcement that "all was quiet on the Potomac." The rank and file of the army

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 9 and 11.

complained of inaction; young men who had sought subordinate commands as openings to the pathway to distinction, grieved as the bright weeks and months followed each other, while no portion of the Army of the Potomac was permitted to indulge even in armed reconnoissances as practice in something beside the daily routine of camp-life for themselves and their commands.

Before Mr. Stanton entered the Cabinet the people knew that our troops had long been held at bay by the "Quaker" or wooden guns which lowered upon them from the earthworks at Munson's Hill. Discussion, popular and congressional, excited their discontent. In the course of the debate on his resolution of the 5th of December, 1861,—the object of which was to appoint a Senate Committee to inquire into the failures of the war—Mr. Chandler of Michigan said:

"One of our number (Baker of Oregon) has been slain, and the verdict of the army is that nobody is to blame. One thousand eight hundred men were sent across the Potomac River with two old scows, and overwhelmed and cut to pieces, without any means of retreat. I think the Senate owes it to itself to look into the cause of this disaster."¹

The total negative vote on the adoption of this resolution as finally modified was cast by General McClellan's senatorial guardians, Latham and Rice, with Senator Carlisle of Virginia.

Nor had the people forgotten that they had been told by McClellan that the advance of his army should not be later than November; yet the beautiful summer and autumn and the summer-like month of December had passed and been succeeded by a winter of unprecedented

¹ *Congressional Globe*. Vol. LVII., page 29.

rains. They had not only believed that the advance would be made in November, but had hoped that the "young general" had named a day unnecessarily late that he might surprise them by an earlier movement, and expressed their disappointment in language which might well excite the President's impatience. The advance had not been made, nor had the General carried into effect the alternative he had suggested in his communication to Secretary Cameron, and put the army into winter quarters. During January and February the rain was almost incessant; and letters which went from camp to most of the post-offices in the Northern States describing the deplorable condition of the rank and file swelled the discontent of the country. As spring approached, Major-General David B. Birney, who had recruited and was then Colonel of the 23d Pennsylvania Volunteers, said to me: "The inaction during the months of fine weather did much to demoralize the army, but under this protracted deluge it is being wasted by disease, death, and desertion. When General McClellan abandoned the idea of an advance he should have put us into winter quarters."

Meanwhile, the General's congressional friends continued to stir the impatience of the country by their efforts to embarrass and restrain the military authorities. On the 10th of December, Mr. Pendleton, as a member of the Judiciary Committee, submitted to the House, on his own behalf, a minority report, and introduced the following resolution, in support of which he proceeded to make an elaborate argument.¹

Resolved, That the Congress alone has the power, under the Constitution of the United States, to suspend the privilege of the writ of *habeas corpus*; that the exercise of that power by

¹ *Congressional Globe*, Vol. LVII., p. 40.

any other department of the government is a usurpation, and therefore dangerous to the liberties of the people ; that it is the duty of the President to deliver Charles Howard, William H. Gatchell, and John W. Davis to the custody of the marshal of the proper district, if they are charged with any offence against the laws of the United States, to the end that they may be indicted, and “ enjoy the right of a speedy and public trial by an impartial jury of the State and district wherein the crime ” is alleged to have been committed.

Having previously introduced a resolution deprecating the action of the government in the premises, Mr. Vallandigham, on January 7th, made a rhetorical protest against the surrender of Mason and Slidell as an act of cowardice, which would probably tempt England to make war upon us. He was specially severe upon the Administration for the time and manner of the surrender. In opening his remarks, he said :

“ I avail myself of this, the earliest opportunity yet presented, to express my utter and strong condemnation, as one of the Representatives of the people, of the act of the Administration surrendering Mr. Mason and Mr. Slidell to the British Government. For six weeks, sir, they were held in close custody as ‘ traitors,’ in a fortress of the United States, by order of the Secretary of State, and with the approval and applause of the press, of the public men, of the Navy Department, of this House, and of the people of the United States, with a full knowledge of the manner and all the circumstances of their capture ; and yet, in six days after the imperious and peremptory demand of Great Britain, they were abjectly surrendered upon the mere rumor of the approach of a hostile fleet ; and thus, sir, for the first time in our national history, have we strutted insolently into a quarrel without right, and then basely crept out of it without honor ; and thus, too, for

the first time, has the American eagle been made to cower before the British lion.”¹

The question involved in what is known as the Trent case was the right of a belligerent to search vessels flying a neutral flag on the high seas. It was as a protest against the exercise of this power that we declared war against England in 1812; and, however well meant was the “bringing to” of the *Trent* and the transfer to a United States war-steamer of Mason and Slidell, it was in contravention of our own principles, and brought the Administration into a false position. In the course of an immediate reply to Mr. Vallandigham, Mr. Kelley, of Pennsylvania, appreciating the circumstances, said :

“I do not wish to see a war with England. Nor do I feel humiliated by the settlement of the Trent difficulty. I see that—in an hour when our pride was sorely touched, when the act seemed to be one of humiliation—we were able to maintain the position for which our country has contended for more than half a century, and for the maintenance of which it had once involved itself in war. The Trent case is settled on a doctrine which has always been the doctrine of the American people. I cannot sympathize with those who say : ‘Settle our domestic difficulties, and then turn on England for the insult and outrage she put upon us.’ Sir, let us settle our domestic difficulties. Let us do so promptly—the more humanely because so promptly and vigorously—with no reference to foreign nations, but with an eye single to what is due to our own great country, its grand though brief history, its grander, and, I trust, more enduring future. Let us take care that, from this day henceforward, the country shall be ready to stand by the law as in its hour of need and wounded pride it settled it. Let us see that, when again the question of neutral rights

¹ *Congressional Globe*, Vol. LVII., p. 208.

comes up, the United States shall be ready with force upon the sea and heart upon the land to meet the world in arms in defence of their cherished doctrine thus sanctified anew to the hearts of their people.

“War, sir, terrible as it is, has its laws. It is also said to have its amenities ; and I believe it has, though the foe with which we are now engaged has found no opportunity to illustrate them. It is said on this floor, by the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. Vallandigham), that the settlement of the Trent case will invite war or insult from England. I think that England would, for reasons of state policy, like very much to engage in war with America at this time—not the English people, but the governing classes of England. And, sir, I think our own course of action—or, to speak more precisely, of inaction—invites them to declare war. I think that the condition of this capital to-day invites war from any Power that feels disposed to make its own terms with armed impotence. Look at it, sir. The city is surrounded with newly made earthworks, scientifically planned and well constructed, well manned, and well supplied with approved armaments. Soldiers tell us that thirty thousand men would hold this capital against any force that can be brought against it. It is environed within a narrow circuit by two hundred thousand men in arms. And yet, sir, the short river which leads to this capital of a great and proud country, thus defended and encircled by patriot troops, is so thoroughly blockaded by rebels that the government, though its army has not an adequate supply of forage, cannot bring upon it a peck of oats to feed a hungry horse. Is not this a sight which jealous nations may behold with exultation, and from which they may deduce a want of spirit, courage, military capacity—call it what you please ? It is a sight at which men may well wonder, and which the gods must pity ! We have six hundred thousand men in the field. We have spent, I know not how many hundred millions of dollars ; and what have we done ? What one evidence of determined war or military skill

have we exhibited to foreign nations or our own people? Why, sir, we are carrying on war on peace principles. We have been engaged in it for seven months, and if the Government of England will infer from the conduct of this war what our treatment of her would be in the event of war, she will conclude that if she were to put her troops into Canada, the American Government would plant an army of a quarter of a million of men on the American shore of the lakes, whose sole duty it should be to prevent Canadians from deserting the English standard, and periling their lives in the cause of constitutional republicanism. Our army does not seem to be engaged in war. Our men, it is true, are liable to be murdered when serving as pickets. They are liable to be slaughtered, as my townsmen were at Ball's Bluff. They are liable to encounter masked batteries, served by concealed foes. But they are not led to where they might hurt anybody. Their business seems to be to prevent desertion from the standard of the enemy, to prevent men in the enemy's lines from quitting their work at digging the enemy's trenches, or bearing the enemy's arms, or serving the enemy in any other manner prejudicial to our cause.

* * * * *

"* * * Our generals must learn that these are not the piping times of peace, and throw something of the vigor of war into their doings. England may not respect international law; but she does respect power. Let her hear by the next west wind the booming of cannon and the rattle of musketry. Let her hear the shouts of a victorious army. Nay, sir, if it need be, let the groans of the dying and the wailing and lamentations of the bereaved go mingling with the shouts of the victors, and England and the Powers of the continent will pause with bated breath. Let the power of our army be put forth in the contest in which we are now engaged, and we shall have no trouble with foreign nations. But so long as our army is used, as it now is, as a mere band of armed police to prevent

the laborers of the rebels and the disaffected men of their country from escaping and serving us, to secure the enemy plenty of men to dig their trenches and perform their labor ; so long, I say, as we employ six hundred thousand armed men to secure to the rebels the laborers to raise their crops and provide clothes for the next year, nations will insult and deride us, and we will be in danger of foreign war.”¹

In view of the general feeling induced by the facts referred to in these remarks, it will not be doubted that the President felt his responsibility and partook of the general impatience, and while it will be admitted that he might well be impatient, it must also be remembered that Stanton had never been a member of his Administration. The season when the rain must cease and armies might again move was approaching ; and it was now, in this season of almost universal despondency, that the loyal heart was thrilled by the announcement that the President, having determined to put at the head of the War Department a man of convictions, courage, and will, who would constrain the General-in-Chief to permit our soldiers to fight or to retire from their command, had sent to the Senate the nomination of Edwin M. Stanton, as Secretary of War.

Having been promptly confirmed, Mr. Stanton assumed control of the War Department on the 20th of January, and on the 27th the President issued the order for an advance, which is known as General War Order Number One.

It directed : “That the 22d day of February, 1862, be the day for a general movement of the land and naval forces of the United States against the insurgent forces.” It was followed on the 31st by what is known as Special War Order Number One, ordering :

¹ *Congressional Globe*, Vol. LVII., pp. 213-14.

"That all the disposable force of the Army of the Potomac, after providing safely for the defence of Washington, be formed into an expedition for the immediate object of seizing and occupying a point upon the railroad southwestward of what is known as Manassas Junction, all details to be in the discretion of the Commander-in-Chief, and the expedition to move before or on the 22d of February next."

Of course these orders evoked a protest from McClellan to which, on the 3d of February the President made the following characteristic rejoinder :

"MY DEAR SIR.—You and I have distinct and different plans for a movement of the Army of the Potomac—yours to be down the Chesapeake, up the Rappahannock to Urbana, and across land to the terminus of the railroad on the York River ; mine to move directly to a point on the railroads southwest of Manassas.

"If you will give me satisfactory answers to the following questions I shall gladly yield my plan to yours :

"1st.—Does not your plan involve a greatly larger expenditure of *time* and *money* than mine ?

"2d.—Wherein is a victory *more certain* by your plan than mine ?

"3d.—Wherein is a victory *more valuable* by your plan than mine ?

"4th.—In fact, would it not be less valuable in this, that it would break no great line of the enemy's communications, while mine would ?

"5th.—In case of disaster, would not a retreat be more difficult by your plan than mine ?" ¹

To this letter no direct reply was made, but a memorandum of even date, addressed to the Secretary of War, may be found on pages 42-5 Series I., Vol. V., of the

¹ Page 41, Vol. V., Series I., "Records, War of the Rebellion."

Records of the Rebellion, which it was intimated to the President might be considered as the General's reply to his direct interrogatories.

He opened this paper with an elaborate defence of his military conduct. After which he proceeded to present his estimate of the plans suggested by the President and himself. He said that two bases of operations seemed to present themselves for the Army of the Potomac, and proceeded to consider, first, the President's—that of Washington for a base, which he condemned with a large exhibition of detail ; and, second, that of the lower Chesapeake Bay, which would have Urbana on the Rappahannock as its base of supplies. This was his supreme choice ; but to Urbana—should circumstances prevent the use of that point—there was available an alternative : Mob Jack Bay. In view, however, of the uncertainties of war, it was admitted that both these points might fail ; and if for any reason both should have to be abandoned, and the “ worst come to the worst,” he suggested as a *dernier ressort* the use of Fortress Monroe as a base. For the Washington base, with Manassas as the first point to be assailed—which was the President's plan—he could find no commendation ; and his condemnation seemed at times to be absolutely derisive. To it he preferred Fort Monroe, saying : “ So much am I in favor of the southern line, that I would prefer the move from Fortress Monroe as a base * * * to an attack upon Manassas.”

Thus we have McClellan's deliberate official assurance given to the Government on the third day of February, less than five weeks before the assembling of the council of division commanders to consider a plan of which Fortress Monroe was the base, that it was one to be resorted to only when “ the worst had come to the worst.”

It was an evident object of this memorandum to convince the President that its author was thoroughly familiar with the topography and geography of the Peninsula. Among his statements in support of the Peninsula route was that "The roads in that region are passable at all seasons of the year"; that "the country is much more favorable for offensive operations than that in front of Washington, much more level, more cleared land, the woods less dense, the soil more sandy, and the spring some two or three weeks earlier."¹

I am able to say that though the President did not consider the argument of this incidental reply to his direct communication satisfactory before rejecting it, he consulted officers of largest experience and highest repute, and after hearing their views adhered to his own plan. But apart from general plans of campaign, and preliminary to the execution of either of them, two points demanded prompt and successful action. They were the destruction of the rebel batteries on the Potomac, and the release of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, in the neighborhood of Harper's Ferry, from the control of the enemy.

The propriety of this demand was so obvious that it opened no ground for cavil. Washington was, and had for months been, a beleaguered city, notwithstanding the fact which, with the official records of both armies now before us, we know, that with the army under McClellan, magnificent alike in numbers and appointments beyond parallel in modern times, its commander had but to exhibit a determined purpose to free both river and railroad, and the enemy must have retired before the sound of the tread of his advancing legions. Indeed it is undisputed

¹ Vol. V., p. 44, "Records, War of the Rebellion."

history that General Jos. E. Johnston, whose force numbered not one third of McClellan's, which it had so long held in check, abandoned Centreville March 7th-9th, in pursuance of a conclusion arrived at on or about the 20th of February,¹ because it was known to be inadequate to resist the advance of the Union Army which the Confederate generals believed the impatience of the people would compel as soon as the roads would admit of the movement of troops. The Potomac batteries went with Johnston's retiring army.

But the release of the railroad was another matter. Harper's Ferry and Winchester were not distinctly covered by any of the general movements ordered by the President. They must therefore be specially dealt with, and Mr. Lincoln, knowing not the powers with which he contended, gave his tardy general a new plea for procrastination when he made this demand for a service so simple and, to so great an army, so easy of execution.

Procrastination was, however, but one of the minor consequences of this order. The delay consequent upon the failure of a promised surprise humiliated the President, and thus endangered the General's position, to save which became the pretext for the cabal to be referred to.²

¹ The relative strength of the two armies for the month of February, 1862, as shown by the official reports, was as follows :

Army of the Potomac, commanded by McClellan—present for duty, 185,420 officers and men, with 534 pieces of artillery. (See page 732, Vol. V., Series I., "Record, War of the Rebellion.") And in the Army of Northern Virginia, commanded by Johnston, the aggregate present and absent was 84,222, and the effective total present for duty was 47,617, of whom but 2,976 were in the artillery service. The guns so small a number of men could handle would not have been able to present much resistance to McClellan's 534 pieces of field and heavy artillery. (See page 1086, Vol. V., Series I., "Records, War of the Rebellion.")

² See page 29.

Though the General now complains of the "Government's great impatience" in regard to the opening of the road and destruction of the batteries, on the receipt of that order he for once seemed to enter upon an aggressive duty with earnestness and alacrity. A great strategetical movement, so he had confidently advised Lincoln and Stanton, was to be made for the release of the railroad and the capture of Winchester and the rebel forces in the vicinity.

The enemy, he said, was to be beguiled by the construction of a light pontoon bridge which would not, as it crossed a river so liable to freshets and which afforded such poor holding ground as the Upper Potomac, excite the apprehension of the rebels by threatening any serious danger. His real and effective plan involved a bridge of canal boats so thoroughly constructed that it would carry masses of troops, including artillery and supplies. Without letting any of his friends know where or when the movement was to occur, the President said confidentially that a grateful surprise was preparing for the country, the success of which would restore McClellan to popular confidence. When on one occasion the statement was received with incredulity, he said, with a good-natured smile: "But McClellan has, in this case, left himself without a loop-hole through which to escape, for he has said to both Stanton and myself: 'If this move fails, I will have nobody to blame but myself.'"

What is here said about the pontoon bridge and the character of the river, must not be understood as implying that I then knew the field from which the country was to expect so inspiring an event as a surprise of any part of the enemy's forces. I refer to the matter here simply to show how gladly the President and Mr. Stanton welcomed

any promise of successful action on the part of him who now ascribes his want of success to their machinations.

The day came on which the promised surprise was to be executed. Scott had commended McClellan as an exceptionally gifted organizer and engineer, and he had been for weeks engaged in organizing a minor expedition, which was to avoid the effusion of blood by surprising a relatively feeble force.

The width of the canal and lift-lock had always been open to measurement by him and his engineer staff. Neither the quartermaster nor any other representative of the President or Secretary of War had controlled him in the selection of boats. Boats and all other necessary material of his own selection had, under his supervision, been concentrated near the lift-lock, and the President had been advised that his promised surprise would be executed on the morning of the 27th, the next day. I have always thought that McClellan, in that hour of enthusiasm, believed that it would be, for he telegraphed Stanton, at 10:20 P.M. of the 26th, saying: "The bridge was splendidly thrown by Captain Duane, assisted by Lieutenants Babcock, Reese, and Cross"; that he regarded it as "one of the most difficult operations of the kind ever performed"; that "he recommended Captain Duane to be made a major by brevet, and Lieutenants Babcock, Reese, and Cross, all of the Corps of Engineers, to be brevetted to captaincies." "Eight thousand five hundred infantry, eighteen guns, and two squadrons of cavalry" had crossed it, he said, and were well posted on the Virginia side, and "ready to resist any attack." "It had," he continued, "enabled us already "to occupy Loudoun and Bolivar heights, as well as the Maryland heights." "Burns' brigade," he said, "will be here in a couple of hours, and will cross it at day-

break. Four more squadrons of cavalry and several more guns pass here." Then came the ominous announcement that he had "reports that G. W. Smith, with fifteen thousand men, is expected at Winchester." But his spirits seem not to have been depressed by so improbable a report, for he added: "We will attempt the canal-boat bridge tomorrow. The spirit of the troops is most excellent. They are in the mood to fight any thing." The tone and manner of this dispatch convinced the Administration that at length McClellan had determined to restore himself and it to popular confidence.

The President knew that the report that General G. W. Smith and fifteen thousand men could be withdrawn from Centreville and Manassas was preposterous, and did not allow it to mar his happiness; nor could he see any reason why the regulars and the forces of Hooker and Keyes that had been ordered to strengthen McClellan, and some of whom were already on the road, should not continue their march into Virginia, over the pontoon bridge, should they arrive before the canal-boat bridge had been completed. The day, the 27th, was advancing, why did not the General advise him or the Department of the progress of affairs? He was probably too much absorbed by duty to permit him to communicate—at least so thought Mr. Lincoln. That he was absorbed was true. He had assumed responsibilities which involved many orders and other communications. Though too much engrossed to telegraph for advice or consent from, or to disclose his purpose to, the President or the Secretary of War, he had found time to send three dispatches to General Marcy, Chief of Staff. They were as follows:

"Do not send the regular infantry until further orders. Give Hooker orders not to move until further orders."¹

¹ Page 728, Vol. V., Series I., "Records, War of the Rebellion."

"Revoke Hooker's authority, in accordance with Barnard's opinion. Immediately on my return we will take the other plan, and push on vigorously." ¹

"The difficulties here are so great that the order for Keyes' movement must be countermanded until the railway bridge is finished or some more permanent arrangement made. It is impossible to supply a large force here. Please inform Garrett at once." ²

The General's order of countermand to Mr. Garrett, President of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, does not, of course, appear among the official records of the Government, but that it elicited the following communication to the Chief of Staff is shown on page 729, Vol. V., Series I., of the "Records":

"I understand that the General commanding directs that all the arrangements for transportation of troops from Washington be stopped, and that the movements will not take place until further notice. The General commanding also telegraphs to send back all the troops that have started, which order I have communicated to Mr. Smith, now at Relay, in charge of transportation at that point. Shall the horses and artillery be ordered back? I have directed the trains held, awaiting your instructions regarding the latter."

The President, under the inspiration received on the preceding night, hoped anxiously for further news. His confidence in the success of the movement was unabated; he felt that the enemy had already been surprised, and that—at least in confidential official circles—he might say that McClellan had occupied important positions in Virginia, and that troops enough to resist any force that could be thrown against him were already *en route* for

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*

Harper's Ferry, where a pontoon bridge, that would carry them all in brigades, had already been thrown. But as the shadows lengthened those who knew him well could not fail to notice indications of unusual anxiety. He paced the floor of the Executive Chamber; he was restless, and not as he had been through the earlier hours of the day, ready to greet visitors with a smile and cheering word. It was evident that his confidence was fading, and that he was under the influence of misgivings lest his General had again deluded him and disappointed the country. A few favorable words from McClellan would have restored his wonted equanimity, but they did not come; but soon after dark Mr. Stanton came from the War Department and handed him a dispatch he had just received from the General. It was dated Sandy Hook, 3:30 P.M., and read as follows:

"The lift-lock is too small to permit the canal-boats to enter the river, so that it is impossible to construct the permanent bridge as I intended. I shall probably be obliged to fall back upon the safe and slow plan of merely covering the reconstruction of the railroad. This will be done at once, but will be tedious. I cannot, as things now are, be sure of my supplies for the force necessary to seize Winchester, which is probably reinforced from Manassas. The wiser plan is to rebuild the railroad bridge as rapidly as possible, and then act according to the state of affairs."¹

It will be observed that this dispatch contained no intimation that the orders for the advance of troops to sustain those who had been posted in Virginia against the alleged threatened advance from Manassas had been countermanded.

¹ Page 728, Vol. V., Series I., "Records, War of the Rebellion."

Before leaving the Department Stanton had replied as follows :

"If the lift-lock is not big enough, why cannot it be made big enough? Please answer immediately."

The reply to which was as follows, and bore date 10:30 P.M. :

"It can be enlarged, but entire masonry must be destroyed and rebuilt, and new gates made—an operation impossible in the present stage of water, and requiring many weeks at any time. The railroad bridge can be rebuilt many weeks before this could be done."¹

This failure, and the ridiculous excuse for it—that the engineers had neglected to ascertain the width of the lock through which the boats they were concentrating were to pass,—gave rise to a popular fear that the sacrifices and scandals of Ball's Bluff were to be repeated on a grander scale near Harper's Ferry, and at one o'clock on the 28th Stanton telegraphed :

"What do you propose to do with the troops that have crossed the Potomac?"

To which McClellan replied :

"I propose to occupy Charlestown and Bunker Hill, so as to cover the rebuilding of the railway, while I throw over the supplies necessary for an advance in force. I have just men enough to accomplish this. I could not at present supply more."²

At 9:30 P.M. of the same day the President received a telegram in which McClellan asserted that he knew he "had acted wisely, and that the President would cheerfully

¹ Page 728, Vol. V., Series I., "Records, War of the Rebellion."

² Page 730, *Ibid.*

agree with him when he explained"; but the kernel of the message is found in this passage :

"It is impossible for many days to more than supply the troops now here and at Charlestown. We could not supply and move to Winchester for many days, and had I moved more troops here they would have been at a loss for food on the Virginia side."¹

Here was a "change of base." The difficulty had suddenly been found to be with the commissariat, and matters could not be expedited because the Union Army, with the use of the canal and railroad, could not be subsisted in sufficient force to repel a possible enemy, who, should he be found, could be subsisted by wagon trains hauling for many miles over peculiarly bad roads.

Mr. Stanton could, when greatly irritated, find relief in the use of forcible expletives, but it was not so with the great-hearted, patient, long-suffering President, with whom it was my privilege to converse briefly on the night of the 27th. He was more restless than I had ever seen him, and I think more dejected, though he had not yet been advised of the countermanding by McClellan of all orders for the forwarding of troops. His position was pitiable. He knew that the army was aware that Scott had recommended McClellan's advancement and approved his ability; that he (McClellan) had placed his confidential friends in every important command of the Army of the Potomac; and that, whether true or false, the country had been made to believe that the rank and file of the army so worshipped their "Little Commander" that to displace him might produce consequences which he was not willing to risk; yet this was a measure he must now contemplate. In conversation with trusted friends he said that he was.

¹ *Ibid.*

now compelled to doubt whether McClellan had ever considered a plan with a view to its execution; that he did not believe he had; and that it was evident he would not execute movements directed by his superiors. Now, with extreme gravity and emphasis, he added, the time has come when such a plan for a movement toward Richmond must be adopted and be promptly executed by McClellan or his successor. The next day he requested an early interview with the General and, whether by accident or arrangement I do not know, Senators Ben Wade and Andrew Johnson were present when it was held. They were thenceforth unreserved in their denunciation of the General as "treacherous" or "incompetent," and of the puerility of his explanations. It was probably due to the unrestrained expression of their indignation that the public so soon learned that the President had a practicable plan of campaign which would be enforced.

The account of the Harper's Ferry *fiasco* has brought me to a consideration of a part of the secret history of the proposal and adoption of the Peninsular plan *with Fortress Monroe as a base*.

This chapter of our military history is not found among the records to which I have so frequently referred, yet my statements will not suffer for want of corroboration.

I have met Gen. Henry M. Naglee but once; it was casually in the office of the late Hon. Eli K. Price—yet I call him as my first witness. I had learned by his own report the part he had taken in the cabal the object of which was to constrain President Lincoln to abandon his well-considered plan and adopt one which his judgment could not approve, and had, on the 30th of March, 1862, reported the facts to the Secretary of War. In the course of a public address to my fellow-citizens in September,

1864, I referred to some of General Naglee's statements, and alluded to some of the disasters which had resulted from the success of the cabal. There was no attempt at a verbatim report of my speech; the most striking statements were merely alluded to in the notices of the meeting. They, however, attracted the attention of Gen. Naglee and evoked an open letter to me in which he was more abusive of Secretary Stanton than of myself. Knowing that the conversation between us on the occasion of our accidental meeting had been heard not only by Messrs. E. K. Price and Henry C. Townsend, but by Jos. B. Townsend and J. Sergeant Price, Esqrs., and had been carefully noted, and that such a paper would serve, in part at least, as a reply to the General's denial of my statement, I addressed a note to my friend Henry C. Townsend, who was, as he now is, an honored member of the Philadelphia bar, requesting him to furnish me with a copy of the memorandum of the interview made immediately after its occurrence. The reply bore equal date with my note, October 10, 1864. It is herewith, except the purely formal, introductory parts, submitted as an essential preliminary to my recital of the interview of the 30th of March, 1862, with Secretary Stanton, to which I have referred.

"The time," the paper proceeds, "was immediately after Gen. McClellan's retreat to the James River, and while his army, shattered in battle, wasted by disease, and dispirited by successive retreats, was resting at or near Harrison's Landing.

"Congress had just adjourned. You were in my office talking on matters of public interest—the legislation of Congress, etc.; Gen. Naglee was in the adjoining room, upon legal business with E. K. Price, Esq., whose client

he was. When Mr. Price observed you or heard your voice he came forward, and after shaking hands with you said: 'Judge Kelley, I wish you would step into my office and meet Gen. Naglee—he is fresh from the battles of the Peninsula; come in and meet him, and let us see if you and he cannot together throw some light on the darkness that is about us,' and returned to his own room. You turned to me and said: 'What shall I do? I do not desire to meet Gen. Naglee; I know him only as one of Gen. McClellan's pets to whom we owe the disasters of the Peninsula, and if we get into a discussion I may speak my mind so freely as to give offence.' To which I replied: 'Judge, this is no time to cherish personal animosities—we have a country to save—let us all try to work together to that end. General Naglee is a gentleman. You can meet him and discuss matters as one gentleman should with another. Mr. Price asks this as a favor to him, and I advise you to go in.' 'Well,' replied you, 'if you wish it and will accompany me I will go in.'

"We, that is you and I, then entered Mr. Price's office together, and you were introduced to the General by Mr. Price. Your first remark was to this effect: 'Though both Philadelphians, I believe we have never met before, but I have a very pleasant recollection of your father. I remember meeting him in the office of the clerk of the court of which I was a judge, when he spoke of my resemblance to my father, who had been his friend.' Mr. Price then remarked: 'Gentlemen, I have invited this interview, because you represent respectively the Congress and the Army, in the hope that you can give us some explanation of the disasters that have befallen our arms, and some hopes of better results in the future.' You then remarked: 'Mr. Price, you will be good enough to bear

in mind that this interview is of your seeking. I have very clear and decided opinions upon the points to which you refer ; what I shall tell you is derived not from street rumor, or hotel gossip, but from sworn testimony taken befort the Committee on the Conduct of the War, from the President, the Secretary of War, or from official documents in the War Department.'

" 'Soon after the President, in February, 1862, determined that General McClellan should make a movement toward Richmond with his army, a council of war, to consist of the twelve generals of division, was ordered by the General. When it assembled there were eleven generals of division present, and a brigadier representing an absent general of division, and that brigadier was General Naglee' (to which General N. bowed his head in assent). 'The subjects discussed were the best routes to Richmond, consistent with the absolute protection of the capital. There were but three routes proposed. The first was from the point where the army then lay, near Manassas, directly overland—which was put to a vote and received four in favor of it and eight against it ; the four in favor of it were, I think, Sumner, McDowell, Heintzelman, and probably Barnard, and of course it was lost. The next route proposed was by way of Fredericksburg, which was also discussed and put to a vote, receiving but five, viz., the four above named and perhaps McCall, when that also fell. The third and only remaining route, viz., by way of the Peninsula, with Fort Monroe as its base, was then brought up. General Naglee was its first and principal advocate. It was considered, discussed, and finally adopted by a vote of eight in favor and four against it, the four in opposition being those whose names I have already mentioned' (to which General Naglee again bowed his head in assent).

“ ‘When this determination was communicated to the President by General McClellan, the former made and insisted upon his point about the number of men to be left for the protection of the capital, and stated that he thought at least sixty thousand necessary for this purpose, to which General McClellan replied that he thought there was no occasion for any force for that purpose, but if there were, twenty thousand would be amply sufficient ; and after considerable discussion of the point it was finally decided that forty thousand should be retained for that purpose under General McDowell, so that Washington should not under any circumstances be uncovered. In the consideration of this matter between the President and the Secretary of War, the President said to the Secretary: “ We can do nothing else than adopt this plan, and discard all others ; with eight out of twelve division commanders approving it we can’t reject it and adopt another, *without assuming all the responsibility in case of the failure of the one we adopt.*” The Secretary said that while agreeing with the President in his conclusion, he dissented from his arithmetic, adding that the generals who dissented from the proposed plan of campaign were independent of the influence of the commanding general, while all the rest owed their positions to him, and were especially under his influence, so that instead of eight to four there was but one against four. “ You,” he continued, “ as a lawyer in estimating the value of testimony, look not only to the words of the witness, but to his manner and all the surrounding circumstances of bias, interest, or influence that may affect his opinions. Now, who are the eight generals upon whose votes you are going to adopt the proposed plan of campaign? All made so since General McClellan assumed command, and upon his recommenda-

tion, influenced by his views, and subservient to his wishes, while the other four are beyond these influences, so that in fact you have in this decision only the operation of one man's mind." ¹ The Secretary of War told me the President seemed much struck with this view of the case, and after considering some time said: "I admit the full force of your objection, but what can we do? We are civilians—we should be justly held accountable for any disasters if we set up our opinions against those of experienced military men in the practical management of a campaign—we must submit to the action of a majority of the council, and the campaign will have to go on as decided upon by that majority." The Secretary then asked the President about the force to be left for the protection of Washington, and was assured that that part of the President's programme would be firmly adhered to, and that General McDowell was to remain with forty thousand men to cover Washington under all contingencies. These facts I had from the Secretary of War himself.'

"It is proper to state that during all this long recital of facts General Naglee was a most attentive listener, and I thought rather a surprised one at the accuracy of your knowledge of the events attending that historical council of

¹ When early in March, 1862, I formed one of a council of war of twelve general officers to whom this important question was submitted, I had no other intimation of a serious intention to make such a movement than the casual mention of it to me by Gen. McClellan, in the latter part of November. Not having any reason to suppose that any officer of the council had any more intimate knowledge of the intention than myself, and knowing how much thought the slight intimation I had received had cost me, I naturally expected deliberation and discussion. To my great surprise, eight of the twelve officers present voted, off-hand, *for* the measure, *without* discussion; nor was any argument on my part available to obtain a reconsideration.—"The Peninsular Campaign and Its Antecedents," by Gen. J. G. Barnard, pp. 51, 52.

war, and did not once offer to interrupt your narrative or correct your statements, but, on the contrary, repeatedly signified his assent by an inclination of his head.

“You then went on to say: ‘We all know how the campaign opened, the splendid and complete preparation in all respects, the immense force, the long delays in embarking troops, the slow progress, the final disasters, defeat, and retreat to Harrison’s Landing.’ General Naglee then remarked: ‘Had we received the coöperation of General McDowell’s corps, as promised, we could undoubtedly have been entirely successful.’ To which you replied: ‘But, sir, the campaign, on that route and in that manner and with an army less in force than that to which it was subsequently increased by the addition of Franklin’s and McCall’s divisions of McDowell’s corps, was undertaken by General McClellan with the most positive, distinct, and expressed determination on the part of the President that McDowell should remain with his corps for the protection of Washington; and I can tell you, General Naglee, a fact which you do not probably know, I saw in the hands of the Secretary of War, and was present when it was received, a dispatch from General McClellan, in these words: “I acknowledge the arrival of General McCall’s division, and am fully prepared for the enemy in any force he can bring against me.”’ General Naglee expressed much surprise at this statement, and remarked: ‘We were always told that General McDowell was to come down from Fredericksburg and coöperate with us in the capture of Richmond. The failure to do this was the chief cause of our want of success. Another cause that interfered seriously with our progress up the Peninsula was the unprecedented rains of the season—the oldest inhabitant of the region frequently remarked that such a

wet season had never been known there. As a consequence we found a country that in ordinary times was quite favorable for military movements converted into swamps and rendered impassable.' I then put to General Naglee the following question: 'Do you, with your experience of this summer, consider General McClellan equal to the task of properly handling so large an army and conducting so vast a campaign?' To which General Naglee replied: 'While he may not be, I do not know his superior—I do not know that we have a general that can properly handle a hundred thousand men in the field.' To which I replied: 'But, sir, we have a government to protect—a country to save, and because one general or another fails we cannot settle down into submission, under the theory that the work cannot be done, we must go on and try another until we find one that can succeed,' and then added: 'So much for the past, now what is to be done next?' To which General Naglee responded: 'We have to do what is always mortifying to a military man, admit that we have made a mistake in our line of approach to Richmond, get the army away from there as rapidly as possible and try another route, or add large reinforcements to it, if we move again in the same direction.' This terminated the interview, and General Naglee took leave of us. He spoke but little, and then only in reply to questions, but was a respectful and apparently attentive listener to your long and interesting narrative. This was certainly the substance, and almost, if not quite, the exact language of the interview between you and General Naglee.

HENRY C. TOWNSEND."

For a time General Naglee delighted in repeating the facts recited in this memorandum, and in my interview of March 30th with Mr. Stanton, and in boasting of the tact

with which he and his associates had constrained the President to surrender his judgment on so vital a matter as the conduct of the Army of the Potomac in an active campaign, or to assume a responsibility so overwhelming as to cause him and his heroic Secretary of War to shrink from its assumption. But by Sept., 1864, the comments of the living or the shades of the tens of thousands of victims of his cabal who had perished in the swamps and hospitals of the malarious Peninsula had impressed him with the wisdom of silence; and in apparent forgetfulness of the interview we had had in Mr. Price's office, on the 27th of September he addressed me an open letter in which he assumed that I had obtained my information from Mr. Stanton, and said: "Now, my dear sir, this statement is simply false, and on the part of your friend, Mr. Edwin M. Stanton, maliciously false." I immediately responded in an open letter in which, after informing him that he was mistaken in supposing I had derived my information from Mr. Stanton, I named himself as my author, and endeavored to recall to his memory the buoyancy with which, in his conversation with Messrs. Moore and Hacker, both of whom were then living, he had stated every fact to which I had referred.¹ The conclusion of my reply was as follows:

"But, sir, you have also boasted to others of the success Messrs. Latham, Rice, and yourself had in constraining the President to retain General McClellan in command. You know General Gilman Marston, and, doubtless, remember the fact that you and he travelled together some time later from Fortress Monroe to Washington, he being at the time in command of a regiment of New Hampshire volunteers. Do you not remember how fully

¹ Mr. Hacker is dead, but Mr. Moore is an active citizen of Philadelphia.

you detailed to him all the facts I have recited? I do not doubt that you then spoke the truth; the collateral facts prove that you did. But if error there be, it is you who are responsible. General Marston is a brave and truthful man. I know him well, and cheerfully refer any of our military friends to him for proof that you are yourself the author of the story you wantonly ascribe to the Secretary of War, and denounce as maliciously false."¹

War Department.

MILITARY OPERATIONS.

Admit. Joseph Kelly

Date. At all times

Edwin M. Stanton

Immediately after Mr. Stanton entered upon the duties of Secretary of War he requested me to call at his room in the Department every morning before going to the House if I could without neglect of committee business or other duty. I regarded the request as a command and presented myself daily. Observation soon convinced him that access to the Department was too easy and indis-

¹ Gen. Marston is still an active and a justly distinguished citizen of New Hampshire.

criminate for the times, and he issued an order restricting the hours in which calls might be made and regulating the manner of admission. On the morning on which this order was promulgated he handed me a card, the original of which I still have, and of which the cut on the preceding page is a *facsimile*.

Our relations were as confidential as our intercourse was unrestrained. On the morning of Sunday, the 30th of March, I went to the War Department, presented my card, and was admitted. In the ante-room I wrote on my card: "Will probably detain you but a few minutes, but it is important that I should see you." The messenger quickly returned, saying: "The Secretary will see you in a few minutes," and, leaning over my shoulder, whispered: "General McClellan is with him." The General soon took his departure, and I entered, saying: "Mr. Stanton, I may have brought you a 'mare's nest'; if so, as you are involved in the story, you can soon terminate our interview by letting me know that I have been deceived." He replied: "Well, put me to the test"; and I proceeded to make the following statement:

General Henry M. Naglee, who commands a brigade in Hooker's Division, is reported by gentlemen well known to me and in whose veracity I have perfect confidence as having left the depot at Broad and Prime streets, Philadelphia, on the sleeping car for Washington at eleven o'clock last evening. My informants say he entered the car some time before that fixed for the departure of the train, and recognizing old friends in Messrs. George H. Moore and George W. Hacker, seemed anxious to impress them with a sense of his military and political importance and proceeded, without suggestion that the communication was of a confidential character, to tell

them that the President had been so incensed by McClellan's failure to effect his promised surprise by the use of canal-boats for a bridge on the Upper Potomac, that he had given him notice that he would be relieved of his command, if he did not within ten days submit a practicable plan of campaign which he would undertake to execute ; this situation had been brought to the attention of Senator Latham of California, who had written to him (Naglee) that something must be done immediately by McClellan's friends or he would lose his command, as Lincoln's patience would bear no further strain. The Senator had then named the time and place at which they should meet in Washington for conference ; but that, on reaching Washington, instead of meeting Latham he found a letter from him at the designated place of meeting, which told him that he had been suddenly called to New York on Pacific Mail business, but had, before leaving, arranged a meeting with Senator Rice, with whom he directed Naglee to confer as freely as he would with himself, as Rice understood the delicacy of McClellan's situation, and must be treated, as he could safely be, with the utmost frankness. The interview with Senator Rice, General Naglee said, had been satisfactory, and the plan agreed upon was to prepare memoranda as notes for a campaign against Richmond, from Fortress Monroe as a base, on loose slips of paper of different color, texture, and ruling, so as to impress the President with the conviction that McClellan, in spite of the labor in which he had been involved by the Harper's Ferry movement and the excitement caused by the President's imperative demand for a plan under penalty of dismissal, had stolen intervals in which to jot down a point or two at a time, and thus outline a plan which he was willing to submit not only to

the President but to the judgment of a council of division commanders, of whom there were twelve.

As I proceeded to report this part of General Naglee's alleged statement, Mr. Stanton rose in evident excitement and passed to a case in which there were a number of blue-paper boxes, alphabetically arranged, and drawing from one several slips of paper such as General Naglee was reported to have described, he said: "Yes! Here are the slips; these were the implements by which effect was given to a conspiracy to deceive the President, and in consequence of which 80,000 of our best troops are afloat in wooden bottoms; and should the *Merrimac* get among the fleet of transports she could sink them all as easily as she sunk the *Congress* and the *Cumberland*."

I pause here for a brief digression: the following statement by the Prince de Joinville, of the condition of things he found when, as a member of McClellan's Staff, he arrived at Fortress Monroe, illustrates the recklessness of the cabal and justifies the terrible apprehensions that filled Mr. Stanton's mind. It must be remembered that the *Monitor* never demonstrated her power to restrain the *Merrimac*; the battle between them having been a drawn one. Each disabled the other and both retired for repairs.¹ "These," says the Prince, "were the circumstances in which I arrived at Fortress Monroe. Soon the roads were filled with vessels coming from Alexandria or Annapolis, and filled some with soldiers, some with horses, cannon, and munitions of all kinds. Sometimes I counted several hundred vessels at the anchorage, and among them twenty or twenty-five large steam transports waiting for

¹ See "The First Fight of Iron-Clads," page 738 of the *Century* for March, 1885, and "In the *Monitor* Turret," same number of *Century*, page 754—for accounts, one by a Confederate and the other by a Union officer, who assisted in conducting this drawn battle.

their turn to come up to the quay and land the fifteen or twenty thousand men whom they brought. The reader may judge how fearful would have been the catastrophe had the *Merrimac* suddenly appeared among this swarm of ships, striking them one after another, and sending to the bottom these human hives with all their inmates! The Federal authorities, both naval and military, here underwent several days of the keenest anxiety. Every time that a smoke was seen above the trees which concealed the Elizabeth River, men's hearts beat fast."

Continuing my report I said to Mr. Stanton that my informants had told me that General Naglee added that a good deal of tact had to be exercised in the preparation and management of the council. It would not do, he said, for McClellan to attend, as the plan was inconsistent with that which he had pressed upon the President as the most feasible, and if he were there he would have to explain and defend details he had not considered; that it would not do to have Hooker there, as the proposed campaign was in opposition to his known views and he would undoubtedly oppose it; and that McDowell, who he said regarded himself as one of the most thoroughly educated officers of the army, and was fond of talking, must be silenced, which could be done by placing him in the chair, as might be done in the absence of McClellan. He added they had been sure they could count on at least seven to five in the way the thing would be managed, as he had prevented notice being sent to Hooker, and would represent him on the assumed ground that he was sick and had requested Naglee to represent him in the council.

Here, again, Mr. Stanton interrupted me by saying: "The story lacks no point of detail; let the President put what question he might, Naglee would answer to the

exclusion of the generals who ranked him"; and at length I said to him: "This is a council of division commanders and you are in command but of a brigade; what are *you* doing here? When, as you have stated, he answered that his brigade was in Hooker's division, and Hooker finding himself seriously indisposed had conferred with him and requested him to represent him in the council." Mr. Stanton then proceeded to relate what occurred in the subsequent conference between the President and himself, the salient points of which will be found in the memorandum of Mr. Townsend.

It is proper, before leaving this part of the subject, that I should add what I seem to have omitted from my interview with General Naglee: that Mr. Stanton had said, that General Blenker neutralized his vote by admitting that he did not understand the plan, but voted for it because it was submitted by the commanding general, whom it was his duty to support; and that General Keyes qualified his support by the condition that no change of base should be made until the Potomac had been cleared of rebel batteries.

But, it will be asked, did General McClellan combine with this cabal to defraud the President of his constitutional rights as Commander-in-Chief and conservator of the nation? On this point, there seems to be no room to doubt. It was *his* plan he requested the President to permit him to submit to a council of division commanders, as to a board of arbitration between them, by whose judgment he was willing to be bound; he did not intimate to the President that Senator Latham and Senator Rice in concert with General Naglee had made the plan which as yet he had not had time to consider, but claiming it as his own staked his future upon its adoption by what his

friend General Naglee frequently described as a packed council of war. But what settles this point beyond all peradventure is the fact that, referring to an interview with the President on pages 140 and 141 of the May number of the *Century*, the General says: "I then explained the purpose and effect of fortifying Washington, and as I thought removed his apprehensions, but informed him that the division commanders were to be at head-quarters that morning, and suggested that *my plans* should be laid before them, that they might give their opinion as to whether the capital would be in danger. I also said that in order to leave them perfectly untrammelled I would not attend the meeting. Accordingly they met on the 8th of March and approved *my plans*."

Again General McClellan is a most accomplished engineer, but it is impossible to study the movements of his army in the Peninsula without discovering that its General was utterly ignorant of the topography and geography of the country, with which in his letter of February 3d, he professed to be so familiar, and into which he had taken his army; and that he did not know the course of its streams, the extent and character of its swamps, or of the military obstructions which his persistent procrastination had permitted the enemy to construct. His once devoted friend, who was Chief of Engineers from the organization of the Army of the Potomac to the end of the Peninsular campaign, General Barnard, astounded by the discovery of his ignorance, exclaimed:

"What, then, is our astonishment when we find that he carried his army into a region of which he was wholly ignorant—that the quasi information he had about it was all erroneous—that within twelve miles of the outposts of troops under his command a powerful defensive line had been thrown up during

the winter and spring, of which he knew nothing whatever, though it lay across his meditated line of march, and altered the whole character of the problem—that the roads which he had said were ‘passable at all seasons’ were of the most horrible character, and the country a wilderness.”¹

But on this question the testimony of no witness but McClellan himself need be invoked, for in his report of the campaign² he said :

“As to the force and position of the enemy, the information then in our possession was vague and untrustworthy. Much of it was obtained from the staff officers of General Wool, and was simply to the effect that Yorktown was surrounded by a continuous line of earth works, with strong water batteries on the York River, and garrisoned by not less than 15,000 troops, under command of General J. B. Magruder. Maps, which had been prepared by the topographical engineers under General Wool’s command, were furnished me, in which the Warwick River was represented as flowing parallel to, but not crossing the road from Newport News to Williamsburg, making the so-called Mulberry Island a real island ; and we had no information as to the true course of the Warwick *across* the Peninsula, nor of the formidable line of works which it covered.”

Men move with caution in the dark, and to McClellan’s profound ignorance of the country into which his political friends had induced him to bring his army is due most of the delays and failures by which he confounded so many of his earlier military admirers. Thus, for weeks Magruder’s army, which had never included more than 11,500 available troops, held the vast Army of the Potomac before Yorktown, and drove its general to resort to the tardy

¹ “The Peninsular Campaign,” Gen. J. G. Barnard, p. 18.

² Cited on pp. 18–19, *Ibid.*

operation of a siege and to demand from Washington a large supply of siege-guns; to which demand the President, enlightened by recent experiences, replied May 1st :

“Your call for Parrott guns from Washington alarms me, chiefly because it argues indefinite procrastination. Is any thing to be done ?”¹

But all shams must come to an end ; and when Magruder found that his army of 11,500 required but 8,000 rations per day to feed it, he felt that the time had come when he could no longer check McClellan’s entire force by “clatter,” and must get out of the way. The evacuation of Yorktown was arranged, and it was the pursuit of its retreating forces that brought on the battle of Williamsburg. It is not my purpose to examine any of the battles of the Peninsula in detail, but as illustrative of many things in McClellan’s management of the Campaign, I submit the following extracts from General Hooker’s report of the battle of Williamsburg :

“Being in pursuit of a retreating army, I deemed it my duty to lose no time in making the disposition of my forces to attack, regardless of their number and position, except to accomplish the result with the least possible sacrifice of life. By so doing my division, if it did not capture the army before me, would at least hold them, in order that some others might. Besides, I knew of the presence of more than 30,000 troops not two miles distant from me, and that within twelve miles—four hours’ march—was the bulk of the Army of the Potomac. My own position was tenable for double that length of time, against three times my number. * * *

“From the earliest moment of the attack it was an object of deep solicitude to establish a connection with the troops in my immediate neighborhood on the Yorktown road, and as that had

¹ “Records, War of the Rebellion,” Vol. XI., Series I., Part III., p. 130.

been accomplished, and as I saw no signs of their advance at 11:20 A.M., I addressed the subjoined note to the assistant adjutant-general, Third Corps, under the impression that his chief was still there. It is as follows :

“ ‘I have had a hard contest all the morning, but do not despair of success. My men are hard at work, but a good deal exhausted. It is reported to me that my communication with you by the Yorktown road is clear of the enemy. Batteries, cavalry, and infantry can take post by the side of mine to whip the enemy.’ ”

* * * * *

“ At this juncture word was received from Col. Taylor that the regiments of his command longest engaged were falling short of ammunition, and when he was informed that the supply train was not yet up, a portion of his command presented an obstinate front to the advance of the enemy with no other cartridges than were gathered from the boxes of the fallen.

“ Again the enemy were reënforced by the arrival of Longstreet's division. His troops had passed through Williamsburg on their retreat from Yorktown, and were recalled to strengthen the rebel forces before Williamsburg. No sooner had they joined than it was known that they were again moving to drive in our left. After a violent and protracted struggle they were again repulsed with great loss. Simultaneous with this movement an attempt was made to drive in our front, and seize the batteries by the troops from Fort Magruder, aided by reënforcements from the redoubts on the left. The withdrawal of the supports invited this attack, and it was at this time that four of our guns were captured. They could have been saved, but only at the risk of losing the day. Whatever of dishonor, if any, is attached to their loss belongs to the brigadier-general commanding the division, and not to his chief of artillery, or to the officers or men serving with the batteries, for truer men never stepped upon the field of battle.

* * * * *

"History will not be believed when it is told that the noble officers and men of my division were permitted to carry on this unequal struggle from morning until night unaided, in the presence of more than 30,000 of their comrades with arms in their hands ; nevertheless it is true. If we failed to capture the rebel army on the plains of Williamsburg it surely will not be ascribed to the want of conduct and courage in my command."

"In entering upon the narrative of the operations of the campaign," says Gen. Alex. S. Webb, in his admirable little volume, entitled, "The Peninsula," "the two leading facts to be met and dealt with are:

"First.—That while General McClellan succeeded in reaching the vicinity of his objective point—the Confederate capital,—the results at each stage of his progress were inadequate and disappointing.

"Second.—That when that point seemed to be within his grasp, his army suddenly encountered reverses, and retreated from its advanced position to the banks of the James."

The justness of General Webb's propositions is established by McClellan's own commanders, who, in their testimony before the Committee on the Conduct of the War, swore that he might have overwhelmed the rebel force arrayed against him and taken Richmond five times during the Peninsular Campaign—at Manassas, Yorktown, Williamsburg, Fair Oaks, and Malvern Hill; and the Confederate General, D. H. Hill in his article on the battle of Gaines' Mill, in the June number of the *Century*, says: "During Lee's absence Richmond was at the mercy of McClellan; but Magruder was there (at Yorktown) to keep up a 'clatter,' as Swinton expresses it. No one was better fitted for such a work. When McClellan landed on the

Peninsula, he had 118,000 men, and Magruder had 11,500 men, to cover a defensive line of fourteen miles. * * * The fortifications around Richmond at that time were very slight. He could have captured the city with but little loss of life. The want of supplies would have forced Lee to attack him as soon as possible, with all the disadvantages of a precipitated movement. But the Federal commander seems to have contemplated nothing of the kind."

Throughout the entire period of his command, McClellan filled the public ear with complaints against Mr. Lincoln and his administration, and from the time Mr. Stanton became Secretary of War with assertions of his malign influence in thwarting his plans, and constraining the President to withhold from him adequate forces, including sometimes those which had been distinctly promised. To these charges, especially those which are revived on page 142 of the *Century* for May, I propose that President Lincoln shall reply from the Executive Chamber on the 9th of April, 1862. The text of this reply will be found in McClellan's report, page 15, Vol. XI., Part I., "Records of the Rebellion." But as the marks by which certain words were emphasized, and the quotation marks which indicate that a pregnant question had previously been put to the General, have been disregarded in copying it for the report, I have followed the original manuscript:

" WASHINGTON, April 9, 1862.

" MAJOR GENERAL MCCLELLAN :

" MY DEAR SIR.—Your dispatches complaining that you are not properly sustained, while they do not offend me, do pain me very much.

" Blenker's division was withdrawn from you before you left

here ; and you know the pressure under which I did it, and, as I thought, acquiesced in it—certainly not without reluctance.

“ After you left I ascertained that less than twenty thousand unorganized men, without a single field battery, were all you designed to be left for the defence of Washington and Manassas Junction ; and part of this even was to go to General Hooker’s old position. General Banks’ corps, once designed for Manassas Junction, was diverted and tied up—on the line of Winchester and Strasburg, and could not leave it without again exposing the Upper Potomac and the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. This presented, or would present, when McDowell and Sumner should be gone, a great temptation to the enemy to turn back from the Rappahannock and sack Washington. My explicit order that Washington should, by the judgment of *all* the commanders of the Army Corps, be left entirely secure, had been neglected. It was precisely this that drove me to detain McDowell.

“ I do not forget that I was satisfied with your arrangement to leave Banks at Manassas Junction ; but when that arrangement was broken up, and *nothing* was substituted for it, of course I was not satisfied ; I was constrained to substitute something for it myself. And now allow me to ask : ‘ Do you really think I should permit the line from Richmond, via Manassas Junction, to this city to be entirely open except what resistance could be presented by less than twenty thousand unorganized troops ? ’ This is a question which the country will not allow me to evade.

“ There is a curious mystery about the *number* of the troops now with you. When I telegraphed you on the 6th, saying you had over a hundred thousand with you, I had just obtained from the Secretary of War a statement, taken, as he said, from your own returns, making 108,000 then with you and *en route* to you. You now say you will have but 85,000 when all *en route* to you shall have reached you. How can the discrepancy of 23,000 be accounted for ?

“As to Gen. Wool’s command, I understand it is doing for you precisely what a like number of your own would have to do if that command was away.

“I suppose the whole force which has gone forward for you is with you by this time, and, if so, I think it is the precise time for you to strike a blow. By delay the enemy will gain faster by *fortifications* and *reënforcements* than you can by reënforcements alone. And once more let me tell you it is indispensable to *you* that you strike a blow. *I* am powerless to help this. You will do me the justice to remember I always insisted that going down the Bay in search of a field, instead of fighting at or near Manassas, was only shifting and not surmounting difficulty; that we would find the same enemy and the same or equal intrenchments at either place. The country will not fail to note, is now noting, that the present hesitation to move upon an intrenched enemy is but the story of Manassas repeated.

“I beg to assure you that I have never written you or spoken to you in greater kindness of feeling than now, nor with a fuller purpose to sustain you, so far as, in my most anxious judgment, I consistently can. But you must act.

“Yours very truly,

“A. LINCOLN.”

Though this letter does not name Mr. Stanton, it is his thorough vindication, and illustrates to the generation which has come to maturity since the great President’s death, the gentleness of his nature, by showing how, when stirred, by persistent misrepresentation, to what General McClellan still regards as extreme impatience, he could reason with a pampered and petulant egotist.

PART II.

THE purpose with which I finished reading Gen. McClellan's paper was to prepare within the limits of a magazine article a defence of my silent friends. Having found it impossible to compress my materials into such limited space, I submit this *brochure* in vindication of the truth of history, and in justice to the illustrious dead, whose memory the writer of that article has so wantonly aspersed.

I do not propose to follow the Army of the Potomac through the disasters which incompetence or covert design inflicted upon it, in slow succession, from Fortress Monroe and Yorktown to Harrison's Landing, but I cannot resist the temptation to borrow a summary of the results of its patriotic toil and suffering, from the pages of the latest, and, in my judgment, the best life of Abraham Lincoln that has yet appeared. The author of this admirable volume, Hon. Isaac N. Arnold, says :¹

“ On the 8th of July, 1862, the President visited the camp of General McClellan, and was depressed on finding that of the magnificent army with which that general had started to capture Richmond, and with all the reënforcements which had been sent to it, there were now remaining only 85,000 effective men. There is a touching story in Roman history, of the Emperor Augustus calling in vain upon Varus to give him back his legions. The President might well have said to McClellan at Harrison's Landing : ‘ Where are my soldiers ?

¹ Page 287.

where are the patriotic young volunteers, vainly sacrificed in fruitless battles from Yorktown to Malvern Hill, and the still larger numbers who have perished in hospitals and in the swamps of the Chickahominy? 'What has been gained by this costly sacrifice?'

"The records of the Confederates make it perfectly clear that there were several occasions when the Army of the Potomac could have broken through their thin lines and gone into Richmond, but McClellan had not the sagacity to discover it, and if he had known of their weakness, he would probably have hesitated until it was too late."

What a contrast to the enervating inaction and fruitless expenditure of money and men summed up in this paragraph, do Grant's military movements present! Indeed, McClellan's incompetency, or want of fidelity to the cause, to the command of whose armies President Lincoln had assigned him, is absolutely demonstrated by a study of Grant's army record.¹ McClellan was as a Major-

¹ June 28, 1861.—Mustered into U. S. Service as Colonel 21st Illinois Infantry.

August 8, 1861.—Assigned to command of the "District of Ironton," Mo.

August 9, 1861.—Appointed Brig.-Gen. U. S. Vols., to date from May 17, 1861.

August 28, 1861.—Assigned to command of all troops in Southern Missouri; this command was extended over Southern Illinois and Western Kentucky, and was exercised by Grant till he took the field in Feb., 1862.

Sept. 6., 1861.—Occupied Paducah, Ky.

Nov. 7, 1861.—Commanded U. S. forces in the battle of Belmont, Mo.

Feb. 6, 1862.—Commanded land forces at capture of Fort Henry, Tenn.

Feb. 14, 1862.—Assigned to command of District of West Tennessee.

Feb. 16, 1862.—Captures Fort Donelson, Tennessee. Appointed Major-General U. S. Vols.

Feb. 17 to Oct. 25, 1862.—Commanding District of West Tennessee.

March 4 to April 13, 1862.—Commanding expedition up the Tennessee River.

April 6 and 7, 1862.—Commanding United States forces at the battle of Pittsburg Landing.

General in command of the Union forces in West Virginia when Grant was employed as a citizen clerk in the office of the Adjutant-General of the State of Illinois, from which humble position he was promoted by Governor Yates to the colonelcy of the 21st Regiment of State Volunteers. Three weeks thereafter, on June 28th, he was mustered into the United States Service, and thenceforth manifested a desire to strike the enemy whenever it could be done. His advancement was rapid beyond precedent, but he won it fairly, step by step, by availing himself of possibilities which had been presented to McClellan, but which neither the voice of military ambition, promising present plaudits and future fame, nor the persuasive powers of Lincoln and Stanton could induce the immediate successor of Winfield Scott in the coveted position of General-in-Chief, to successfully test.

The delays and disasters to which this splendid and

April 13 to June 10, 1862.—Second in command to Major-General Halleck, commanding Department of the Mississippi.

July 16, 1862.—Succeeded General Halleck in command of forces about and west of Corinth.

Oct. 16, 1862.—Assigned to command of the 13th Army Corps and Department of the Tennessee.

Oct. 25, 1862, to Oct. 16, 1863.—Commanding Department of Tennessee.

Oct. 31, 1862, to Jan. 10, 1863.—In immediate command of operations along the Mississippi Central Railroad.

Jan. 30 to July 4, 1863.—In immediate command of operations against Vicksburg.

July 4, 1863.—Appointed Major-General U. S. Army.

Oct. 16, 1863.—Assigned to command of the Military Division of the Mississippi, embracing the Departments of the Cumberland, Ohio, and Tennessee.

Oct. 18, 1863, to March 17, 1864.—Commanding Military Division of the Mississippi.

Nov. 23 to 27, 1863.—Defeats Confederate Army of Tennessee at Missionary Ridge and Lookout Mountain, pursuing it to Ringgold.

thoroughly appointed army had been so long subjected, had had the effect of impairing the confidence of many of its officers in each other, and in many instances of begetting mutual bitterness of feeling. In the West happier conditions prevailed. There success had inspired both officers and men with confidence in themselves and each other, and had turned the thoughts of the country toward that section of the Union as the field from which a successful commander of our Eastern forces must be sought. It was therefore natural that when the President had been convinced that nothing could be hoped for from McClellan's leadership he should commit the command of the army to a Western man, in whom the country might hope if not confide. Accordingly Halleck was appointed General-in-Chief, and assumed command on the 11th of July. About the same time the President, by an Executive order, created the Army of Virginia.

Nov. 25, 1863.—Dispatches Granger, and afterward Sherman, to the succor of Knoxville, Tenn.

March 2, 1864.—Appointed Lieutenant-General of U. S. Army.

March 17, 1864.—Assumes command of the Armies of the United States.

May 4, 1864.—Takes the field with the Army of the Potomac and 9th Army Corps.

May 4 to June 14, 1864.—Engaged in the campaign from the Rapidan to the James as follows :

May 5-7.—Wilderness.

May 8-18.—Spottsylvania.

May 25-27.—North Anna.

June 1-12.—Cold Harbor.

June 14-15.—Crosses James River.

April 15, 1864, to April 2, 1865.—Operations against Petersburg.

March 29 to April 9, 1865.—Final campaign of the Army of the Potomac.

April 2, 1865.—Captures Petersburg.

April 3, 1865.—Occupation of Richmond.

April 9, 1865.—Surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia.

July 25, 1865.—Appointed General of the Armies of the United States.

The first one so appointed under our Constitution.

which he assigned to the command of General John Pope, whose success at Island No. 10, and at New Madrid, on the Mississippi, had illustrated his tact and gallantry. But events soon showed that Pope's discretion was not equal to his courage, for, on assuming command of the three corps—those of Fremont, Banks, and McDowell—which constituted his force, and gave him about 38,000 men with whom to defend Washington, hold the valley of the Shenandoah, and repel the expected approach of Lee, he issued an address to his army which was calculated to wound McClellan's susceptibilities, but which cannot be accepted as a plea in extenuation of the course pursued toward him and his gallant command by McClellan and Fitz-John Porter.

It had become known through an intercepted dispatch from Lee to Stuart as early as the 16th of July, that Lee was preparing to mass an overwhelming army in front of Pope and crush him before he could be reënforced by the Army of the Potomac. Thus advised of his danger, Pope retired behind the Rappahannock. Two patriotic movements were now open to McClellan: To move on Richmond and force Lee back to its defence, for which operation he still had ample resources; or by prompt movements to reënforce Pope, and by their combined forces overwhelm Lee while *en route* to Maryland. Unhappily for his fame, he did neither. The object of this paper does not require me to discuss their motives, or the conduct of McClellan and his most trusted chieftains towards Gen. Pope and his command. The story constitutes one of the most painful and ignoble chapters of our history. As an exhibition of military insubordination and persistent disobedience, within the sound of an enemy's guns, it is unparalleled in modern history. The facts are

proven by official papers, and may be read in orders of the President, the Secretary of War, and the General-in-Chief, which may be found at length in the report of the Committee on the Conduct of the War, in the Official Records, of the War of the Rebellion, and admirably collated and condensed in the biographies of Lincoln by Raymond and Arnold, to which I have referred. It is enough for me to say here that, in consequence of the disregard of orders by McClellan and his chiefs, Pope's army, after three days of desperate fighting, was broken and driven within the defences of Washington. Such was the inglorious termination of the Peninsular Campaign, with Fortress Monroe as a base, during which Gen. McClellan, "from first to last, never made his personal presence felt on a battlefield."¹

Here I would pause, but that my arraignment would lack completeness if I failed to consider two questions which incredulity sometimes propounds.

First.—What motive could have impelled McClellan to forego the fame of a successful general and the grandest object of a noble ambition—the restoration of peace and the preservation of the unity of his country, when torn and distracted by fratricidal war?

Second.—If he were contumacious, faithless, or incompetent, why did Mr. Lincoln continue him in command and restore him thereto after Gen. Pope's betrayal?

While considering the first question, I must remind my readers that I told them that, having driven the venerable Lieutenant-General into retirement, McClellan had placed himself at the head of the party of inaction, and permitted himself to be surrounded by the leaders of the reactionary political forces of the Northern States. I did not

¹ Gen. Palfrey's "Antietam and Fredericksburg," p. 134.

add, as I might have done, and now do, that he was thenceforth recognized as the accepted candidate of those forces for the Presidential election which would occur in the autumn of 1864.

For evidence of his intense solicitude for the preservation of the rights of property of the citizens of the insurgent States, and that he regarded it as a measure of higher importance than the success of our arms, I may refer at large to his orders, proclamations, memoranda, letters, and dispatches, whether addressed to national or State officers, or to individuals, or bodies of citizens. He availed himself of every pretext for expressing his conviction that no act of the Government or army should impair the value or the sacredness of slave property. And his assumption that his army was an armed police, for the protection of slavery, with his persistent refusal to permit it to achieve a decisive victory, justified the country in accepting the declaration of his purpose, made by his friend and subordinate, Major John J. Key, who, in reply to the question: "Why was not the rebel army bagged immediately after the battle of Sharpsburg?" said that "It was not the game; that we should tire the rebels out, and ourselves; that that was the only way the Union could be preserved, we come together fraternally, and slavery be saved." ¹

Strongly confirmatory of Major Key's exposition of "the game" to be played by McClellan, is the general's letter to the President, from the gun-boat on which he had sought safety at Harrison's Landing, after the disasters of Malvern Hill. It opens with a frank confession that the condition of the army was critical, and proceeds to treat of subjects which, he as frankly admits, "do not

¹ Moore's "Rebellion Record," vol. 5, p. 87.

strictly relate to the situation of this army or strictly come within the scope of my official duties." Having, as he supposed, by exaggerated appeals to the apprehensions of the President, prepared the way for bravado, the soldier who professed to believe that there was then an overwhelming army in his front, which could drive him from his positions, or reduce him to submission by blocking his river communications, insolently attempted to play the dictator and announced, to his Commander-in-Chief, the President of the United States, that an Executive declaration of views *especially upon slavery*, which, he could not approve, would rapidly disintegrate the army under his command. But on these delicate points, the General must be allowed to speak for himself. He says:

"HEAD-QUARTERS ARMY OF THE POTOMAC, }
 "Camp near Harrison's Landing, Va., July 7, 1862. }

"MR. PRESIDENT:—You have been fully informed, that the rebel army is in the front, with the purpose of overwhelming us by attacking our positions or reducing us by blocking our river communications. I cannot but regard our condition as critical, and I earnestly desire, in view of possible contingencies, to lay before your Excellency, for your private consideration, my general views concerning the existing state of the rebellion, although they do not strictly relate to the situation of this army, or strictly come within the scope of my official duties.

* * * * *

"Neither confiscation of property, political execution of persons, territorial organization of States, nor *forcible abolition of slavery*, should be contemplated for a moment. In prosecuting the war, *all private property* and unarmed persons should be strictly protected, subject only to the necessity of military operations; all private property taken for military

uses should be paid or receipted for; pillage and waste should be treated as high crimes, all unnecessary trespass sternly prohibited, and offensive demeanor, by the military towards citizens, promptly rebuked. Military arrests should not be tolerated, except in places where active hostilities exist; and oaths, not required by enactments constitutionally made, should be neither demanded nor received. Military government should be confined to the preservation of public order and the protection of political right. *Military power should not be allowed to interfere with the relations of servitude*, either by supporting or impairing the authority of the master, except for repressing disorder as in other cases.

* * * * *

“Unless the principles governing the future conduct of our struggle shall be made known and *approved*, the effort to obtain requisite forces will be almost hopeless. *A declaration of radical views, especially upon slavery*, will rapidly disintegrate our present armies.”¹

Thenceforth McClellan made no special effort to conceal his presidential expectations. Indeed, it was evident that, in his own judgment, his military relations and duties were subordinate to the duties he owed his political partisans. His declaration to the President, that decided measures against slavery would disintegrate our armies, did not restrain Mr. Lincoln from issuing, on the 22d of September, 1862, a proclamation, as “President of the United States of America and Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy thereof,” in which he declared—

“That hereafter, as heretofore, the war will be prosecuted for the object of practically restoring the constitutional relation between the United States and each of the States, and the people thereof, in which States that relation is or may be suspended or disturbed. * * *

¹ McPherson's “Political History,” 1860-64, pp. 385, 386.

“That on the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves, within any State, or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free, and the Executive Government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom.”

And after reciting a recent act of Congress and certain sections of another act, the President added :

“And I do hereby enjoin upon and order all persons engaged in the military and naval service of the United States to observe, obey, and enforce, within their respective spheres of service, the act and sections above recited.”¹

The last paragraph made it the instant duty of each commander of forces in the military and naval service to publish this proclamation to his command. As his Harrison's Landing letter had been published to the country at large simultaneously with its delivery to the President, much curiosity prevailed as to the course McClellan would pursue under the circumstances. The duty required was the promulgation of the proclamation in the orders of the day ; and elsewhere than at the head-quarters of the Army of the Potomac, it was published as part of the orders of the day, on the day of its receipt. But not until October 7th did McClellan issue it to his command, and at that late day he qualified it by an explanatory order of his own, in which he said :

“A proclamation of such grave moment to the nation, officially communicated to the army, affords to the general com-

¹ McPherson's "Political History," 1860-64, pp. 227, 228.

manding an opportunity of defining specifically to the officers and soldiers under his command the relation borne by all persons in the military service of the United States towards the civil authorities of the Government."

And after a dissertation upon the relations of the civil and military power of the Government, he proceeded to console what he evidently believed to be the wounded spirits of his troops by informing them that "the remedy for political errors, if any are committed, is to be found only in the action of the people at the polls."¹

On the 12th day of October, 1863, the General, no longer in command of an army, addressed a letter from Orange, N. J., to the Hon. Chas. J. Biddle, a representative in Congress from Philadelphia, in which he said :

"I desire to state, clearly and distinctly, that having, some days ago, had a full conversation with Judge Woodward, I find that our views agree, and I regard his election as Governor of Pennsylvania called for by the interests of the nation."²

This avowal of absolute accord with Judge Woodward was accepted in political circles as a pregnant fact. Judge Woodward never halted in uncertain opinions. He was a positive man, and had the courage of his convictions. Had he been in the 37th Congress he would have coöperated with Vallandigham, Long, Harris, and other pronounced advocates of slavery and opponents of measures proposed in recognition of the right of the Government to use force in the maintenance of the Union and the integrity of the country; he would, of course, have supported Pendleton's resolution restricting the power to suspend the *habeas corpus* to the Congress of the United States,³ and have distinguished himself by the freedom

¹ McPherson, p. 227. ² McPherson, p. 386. ³ *Supra* page 12.

and intensity of his denunciation of the Government, and of his fellow-citizens who denied the recently promulgated dogma that slavery was national and existed of right under the national flag, whether on sea or land. In his judgment every American citizen was hostile to the best interests of his country who would not consent to the abrogation of the policy of Jefferson, as embodied in the ordinance of 1787, by which slavery had been forever excluded from the Northwestern Territory, and approve the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, under which statutory adjustment, the right to restrict the territorial limits of slavery had been recognized for nearly half a century.

Judge Woodward was one of the few men of the North who were accredited with the open expression of a preference that the dividing line, should a division of the Union occur, should be north of Pennsylvania and west of New England; and in his well-considered and famous speech, to the meeting assembled on the call of the Mayor of Philadelphia, in Independence Square, on the 13th of December, 1860, he said :

“ The inexorable exclusion of slave property from the common territories which the Government holds in trust for the people of all the States, is a natural and direct step toward the grand result of extinguishing slave property, and was one of the record issues of the late election. This policy must be considered as approved also. Not that every man who voted for the successful nominee meant to affirm that a trustee for several coëqual parties has a right, in law or reason, to exclude the property of some and admit that of others, for whom he holds; but so is the record. The South seems inclined to accept the judgment. She holds the property that is to be shut out of the Territories,—that is to be restricted, cribbed,

and confined more and more until it is finally extinguished. Everywhere in the South the people are beginning to look out for the means of self-defence. Could it be expected that she would be indifferent to such events as have occurred?—that she would stand idle, and see measures concerted and carried forward for the annihilation of her property in slaves? Several States propose to retire from the Confederacy, and that justly alarms us. We come together to consider what may be done to prevent it; and we are bound, in fidelity to ourselves and others, to take the measure of the whole magnitude of the danger.”¹ * * *

“Have I not a right to say,” he exclaimed, “that a government which was all-sufficient for the country fifty years ago, when soil and climate and State sovereignty were trusted to regulate the spread of slavery, is insufficient to-day, when every upstart politician can stir the people to mutiny against the domestic institutions of our Southern neighbors—when the ribald jests of seditious editors like Greeley and Beecher can sway legislatures and popular votes against the handiwork of Washington or Madison.”²

Thus General McClellan’s exemplar closed his speech on that momentous occasion, by announcing his readiness to unite in promoting such a revision of the Constitution, framed by Washington and Madison, as would be satisfactory to the slave-holding minority of the Southern people. These extreme opinions were not lightly held by Judge Woodward. Nor was their controlling influence limited to his personal conduct. They regulated his official action. The Supreme Court of Pennsylvania then consisted of five judges, and in opposition to the otherwise almost unbroken current of judicial decision, by Federal and State courts, he gave the casting vote by which the Conscription Law was declared to be

¹ “The American Conflict,” vol. I., p. 364.

² *Ibid.*

unconstitutional, and its enforcement rendered impracticable in Pennsylvania. The opinion of the court was delivered by Chief-Justice Lowrie, whose commission was about to expire, and who, having been renominated, was then a candidate for reëlection. But Judge Woodward was unwilling that the *per-Curiam* opinion should speak for him, and in the course of an opinion delivered by himself said :

“ The great vice of the Conscript Law is that it is founded on an assumption that Congress may take away, not the State rights of a citizen, but the security and foundation of his State rights. And how long is civil liberty expected to last after the securities of civil liberty are destroyed ? The Constitution of the United States committed the liberties of the citizen in part to the Federal Government, but expressly reserved to the States and the people of the States all it did not delegate. It gave the General Government a standing army, but left to the States their militia. Its purposes in all this balancing of power were wise and good, but this legislation disregards these distinctions and upturns the whole system of government when it converts the State militia into ‘ National Forces,’ and claims to use and govern them as such.”¹

How violently the opinions of the Judge were strained against the Northern cause is seen in the fact that the Circuit Court of the United States for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, both of whose judges, Greer and Cadwallader, were life-long Democrats, after having listened to the amplest argument against the constitutionality of the law, affirmed it, and in the course of their opinion said :

“ This review of the principal enactment of the law suffices

¹ Kneedler *vs.* Lane, 45, Pa. State Reps., p. 252.

to indicate its general purposes. The organization of armies under it is to cease on the termination of the Civil War, for whose exigencies it provides ; and the term of service of those drafted under it cannot exceed three years, though the war should continue longer. Such limitations of the time would have prevented the compulsory requirement of military service from being unconstitutional, though it had included every able-bodied male inhabitant.”¹

The State election was held on the 8th of October, when Chief-Justice Lowrie was defeated by Daniel Agnew, a lawyer who, though comparatively unknown to the people of the State, enjoyed a high reputation among his professional brethren, and the question having been reargued before the court as now constituted, it vacated the orders granted in the cases heard in November, and affirmed the constitutionality of the act, Chief-Justice Strong and Justices John M. Read and Agnew making the order, and Justices Woodward and Thompson reiterating their denial of its constitutionality. In closing the opinion of the court, which was delivered by Justice Agnew, who, as if to emphasize the grounds of his dissent from Judge Woodward’s opinion, said :

“The constitutional authority to use the national forces creates a corresponding duty to provide a number adequate to the necessity. The duty is vital and essential, falling back on the fundamental right of self-preservation, and the powers expressed to declare war, raise armies, maintain navies, and provide for the common defence. Power and duty now go hand in hand with the extremity until every available man in the nation is called into service, if the emergency requires it, and of this there can be no judge but Congress.”²

¹ McPherson, p. 273.

² *Smith vs. Lane et al.* Grant’s Cases, Sup. Ct., Pa., vol. III., p. 552.

Horatio Seymour, Governor of New York, sought distinction by opposing the draft, and while the Anti-Draft riots raged in New York, announced to a tumultuous mob of his "friends" that he had prepared an appeal from the action of the Administration which he had transmitted to the President by his adjutant.¹ The conduct of Governor Seymour in thus exciting popular resistance to the enforcement of the Conscription Law invited a discussion of the subject by Mr. Lincoln, who, in replying to the Governor's appeal, demonstrated the necessity for, and consequently the constitutionality of, the law. In the course of his letter the President said :

"I do not object to abide the decision of the United States Supreme Court, or of the Judges thereof, on the constitutionality of the Draft Law. In fact, I should be willing to facilitate the obtaining of it. But I cannot consent to lose the time while it is being obtained. We are contending with an enemy who, as I understand, drives every able-bodied man he can reach into his ranks very much as a butcher drives bullocks into a slaughter-pen. No time is wasted ; no argument is used. This produces an army which will soon turn upon our now victorious soldiers, already in the field, if they shall not be sustained by recruits as they should be. It produces an army with a rapidity not to be matched on our side, if we first waste time to reëxperiment with the volunteer system, already deemed by Congress, and palpably in fact, so far exhausted as to be inadequate ; and then more time to obtain a court decision as to whether the law is constitutional which requires a part of those not now in the service to go to the aid of those who are already in it ; and still more time to determine with absolute certainty that we get those who are to go in the precisely legal proportion to those who are not to go. My pur-

¹ "New York and the Conscription of 1863," General James B. Fry. G. P. Putnam's Sons. Also "The American Conflict," vol. II., pp. 506-507.

pose is to be in my action just and constitutional, and yet practical, in performing the important duty with which I am charged, of maintaining the unity and the free principles of our common country.”¹

On the 29th of August, 1864, a convention assembled at Chicago for the purpose of nominating candidates for President and Vice-President. The call under which it assembled was for a Democratic national convention, and Governor Seymour presided over its deliberations. It was, however, not a convention of representative Democrats, for it resolved “that after four years of failure to restore the Union by the experiment of war,” “justice, humanity, liberty, and the public welfare demand that immediate efforts be made for a cessation of hostilities,” and one of the attending orators declared that there was no “real difference between a war Democrat and an Abolitionist.” General McClellan was nominated for the Presidency on the first ballot by a vote of 202½ to 23½, and Geo. H. Pendleton was unanimously nominated for the Vice-Presidency. At the November election these nominees received a majority of the votes cast in three States—New Jersey, Delaware, and Kentucky.

In his memorial on the life, character, and services of William H. Seward, Mr. Charles Francis Adams set forth such estimates of Mr. Lincoln’s intelligence, and made such statements as to his relations to the administration of which he was always the master spirit, that Hon. Gideon Welles, who from Mr. Lincoln’s nomination for the presidency till the day of his death had enjoyed familiar and confidential intercourse with him, felt constrained to vindicate his memory from the aspersions cast upon it by one whom he had honored with

¹ “The American Conflict,” vol. II., p. 508.

such distinguished evidence of his confidence as the bestowal of the mission to the Court of St. James. Mr. Welles was one of the ablest of Mr. Lincoln's official family. He had never been stung by the presidential bee, and was indifferent to popular applause, but was a diligent student and an industrious chronicler of current events. His ample diary is for the present a sealed book. It was written for the future, and will not, unless his wishes shall be disregarded, be read by this generation. Moved to indignation by the misrepresentations of Mr. Adams, Mr. Welles drew upon the store-house of his memory and the pages of his diary for the materials with which to vindicate the intelligence and conduct of President Lincoln. Thanks to this labor of love,¹ I am able to answer my second question, and tell in his own language why Mr. Lincoln restored McClellan to the command of his old army after his betrayal of Pope, and when the President and every member of his Cabinet knew he had forfeited their confidence by "atrocious" misconduct. Says Mr. Welles :

"At the stated Cabinet meeting, on Tuesday, the second of September, while the whole community was stirred up and in confusion, and affairs were gloomy beyond any thing that had previously occurred, Stanton entered the council-room a few minutes in advance of Mr. Lincoln, and said, with great excitement, he had just learned from General Halleck that the President had placed McClellan in command of the forces in Washington. The information was surprising, and in view of the prevailing excitement against that officer, alarming. The President soon came in, and in answer to an inquiry from Mr. Chase, confirmed what Stanton had stated. General regret was expressed, and Stanton, with some feeling, remarked that

¹ "Lincoln and Seward," by Gideon Welles, p. 194. Sheldon & Co.

no order to that effect had issued from the War Department. The President, calmly but with some emphasis, said the order was his, and he would be responsible for it to the country. With a retreating and demoralized army tumbling in upon us, and alarm and panic in the community, it was necessary, the President said, that something should be done, but there seemed to be no one to do it. He therefore had directed McClellan, who knew this whole ground, who was the best organizer in the army, whose faculty was to organize and defend, and who would here act upon the defensive, to take this defeated and shattered army and reorganize it. He knew full well the infirmities of McClellan, who was not an affirmative man,—was worth little for an onward movement; but beyond any other officer he had the confidence of the army, and he could more efficiently and speedily reorganize it and put it in condition than any other general. If the Secretary of War or any member of the Cabinet would name a general that could do this as promptly and well he would appoint him. For an active, fighting general, he was sorry to say McClellan was a failure; he had ‘the slows,’—was never ready for battle, and probably never would be; but for this exigency, when organization and defence were needed, he considered him the best man for the service, and the country must have the benefit of his talents, though he had behaved badly. The President said he had seen and given his opinion to General Halleck, who was still General-in-Chief; but Halleck had no plan or views of his own, proposed to do nothing himself, and fully approved his calling upon McClellan.

“In stating what he had done the President was deliberate, but firm and decisive. His language and manner were kind and affectionate, especially toward two of the members, who were greatly disturbed; but every person present felt that he was truly the chief, and every one knew his decision, though mildly expressed, was as fixed and unalterable as if given out with the imperious command and determined will of Andrew

Jackson. A long discussion followed, closing with acquiescence in the decision of the President, but before separating the Secretary of the Treasury expressed his apprehension that the reinstatement of McClellan would prove a national calamity.

"In this instance the President, unaided by others, put forth with firmness and determination the Executive will—the one-man power—against the temporary general sense of the community, as well as of his Cabinet, two of whom, it had been generally supposed, had with him an influence almost as great as the Secretary of State. They had been ready to make issue and resign their places unless McClellan was dismissed; but yet, knowing their opposition, and in spite of it, and of the general dissatisfaction in the community, the President had in that perilous moment exalted him to new and important trusts.

"In an interview with the President on the succeeding Friday, when only he and myself were present, he unburthened his mind freely. Military matters were still in confusion, without plan or purpose, at head-quarters. The Secretary of War, under Pope's defeat and McClellan's reënstatement, was not only disappointed, but dejected and dispirited. The President said most of our troubles grew out of military jealousies. Whether changing the plan of operations (discarding McClellan and placing Pope in command in front) was wise or not, was not now the matter in hand. These things, right or wrong, had been done. If the administration had erred, the country should not have been made to suffer, nor our brave men cut down and butchered. Pope should have been sustained, but he was not. These personal and professional quarrels came in. Whatever may have been said to the contrary, it could not be denied that the army was with McClellan. *He had so skilfully handled his troops in not getting to Richmond* as to retain their confidence. The soldiers certainly had not transferred their confidence to Pope. He could, however, do no more good in this quarter. *It was humiliating, after what had transpired, and all we knew, to reward McClellan*

and those who failed to do their whole duty in the hour of trial, but so it was. Personal considerations must be sacrificed for the public good. He had kept aloof from the dissensions that prevailed, and intended to ; 'but,' said he, 'I must have McClellan to reorganize the army and bring it out of chaos. There has been a design, a purpose, in breaking down Pope, without regard to the consequences to the country, that is *atrocious. It is shocking to see and know this, but there is no remedy at present.* McClellan has the army with him.' These were the views and this the course of the President when there was general dismay in the country and confusion in the army ; the rebels near the intrenchments of Washington, and some of the Cabinet alarmed and preparing to leave. The President was not insensible to the deficiencies or ignorant of the faults of McClellan, nor yet blind to and stubborn as regarded his better qualities. In placing him at the head of the army he went counter to the wishes of his friends, and, forgetful of all else, he subdued every personal feeling, and in the spirit of unselfish patriotism resolved to do what was for the true interest of the country. Had the General followed up the battle of Antietam, which took place a fortnight later, he would have retrieved the misfortunes of the Peninsula, and given to the President additional reason to congratulate himself on the reïnstatement, but the old dilatory infirmity remained, which strengthened the influence that persistently opposed him, and soon after led to his being retired from the command of the army."

On the third day after the Pennsylvania election of October, 1862, I was the President's first visitor, and had just entered upon an earnest conversation with him on the subject of McClellan's mismanagement in permitting the battle of Antietam to cease before the sun had set and while Fitz-John Porter's corps—numbering 35,000 men—was still in reserve, with its entire supply

of ammunition, when my colleague from the Gettysburg district, Hon. Edward McPherson, entered the Executive Chamber. Though there was no concert of action between us, McPherson was quickly followed by our colleague, Hon. J. K. Moorhead, who, having left Pittsburg the previous morning, had spent the night at Harrisburg in consultation with leading citizens of the State, and hastened by the morning train to Washington for conference with the President.

The details of our common interview constitute part of an article, which will appear elsewhere,¹ and I refer to the occasion because it elicited from the President a substantial reiteration of what he said to Mr. Welles in the private interview just quoted.

After considerable discussion my colleagues withdrew, leaving me again alone with the President, when our conversation was resumed at the point at which it had been interrupted. This was just after I had said that though Lee's forces had been driven into a *cul-de-sac*, the outlet from which was a ford that offered but an imperfect roadway for a single line of guns or wagons, and that although Fitz-John Porter's whole corps was fresh, having, with its entire supply of ammunition, been held in reserve, Lee had been allowed, without serious molestation, to retreat beyond the river, with his artillery and supply-trains. Mr. Lincoln deplored this failure to achieve the decisive result, which he said he believed had been clearly within McClellan's grasp, and admitting his absolute unfitness for the position he had occupied, said it was one to which he had not deliberately assigned him. He had, he said, restored him to command to reorganize a broken and demoralized army, and not

¹ "Reminiscences of Abraham Lincoln," by men who knew him.

to fight a great battle, and he owed his command at Antietam quite as much to Lee as he did to him, for while the work of reorganization was proceeding, Lee's attempt to flank the capital, by moving into Maryland, had compelled him to order the army to move and check his advance. At this point, with a smile which might express pity or sarcasm, or a mingling of both, Mr. Lincoln said: "Whatever the troops and people may think and say of his failure to capture Lee's army and supplies, my censure should be tempered by the consciousness of the fact that I did not restore him to command for aggressive fighting, but as an organizer and a good hand at defending a position." In response to the suggestion of familiar facts, or to questions, Mr. Lincoln admitted that McClellan, by incessant, and frequently unfounded, complaints which were calculated to impair their confidence in his superiors, the President and Secretary of War, had done much to destroy the morale of his troops, and that he had wantonly sacrificed Pope; and said that to entrust to him the rescue of the army from its demoralization was a good deal like "curing the bite with the hair of the dog." He said he regarded his position at the time of McClellan's restoration as a striking and noteworthy illustration of the dangers to which Republican institutions were subjected by wars of such magnitude as might produce ambitious and rival commanders; for it must be admitted that the civil power of the Government was then subordinate to the military, and though he acted as Commander-in-Chief, he found himself in that season of insubordination, panic, and general demoralization consciously under military duress. McClellan even while fighting battles which should produce no result but the expenditure of men and means, had contrived to keep the

troops with him, and by charging each new failure to some alleged dereliction of the Secretary of War and President, had created an impression among them that the administration was hostile to him, and withheld vital elements of success that should have been accorded to him, and which, in some instances, he falsely represented as having been promised to him. He said, with much deliberation, that he believed the restoration to command of McClellan, Porter, and other of his chiefs, in the face of the treasonable misconduct of which they had been so flagrantly guilty in the sacrifice of Pope's army, was the greatest trial and most painful duty of his official life. Yet, situated as he was, it seemed to be his duty, and in opposition to every member of his Cabinet he performed it, and felt no regret for what he had done.

"I am now," said he, "stronger with the Army of the Potomac than McClellan. The supremacy of the civil power has been restored, and the Executive is again master of the situation. The troops know, that if I made a mistake in substituting Pope for McClellan, I was capable of rectifying it by again trusting him. They know, too, that neither Stanton nor I withheld any thing from him at Antietam, and that it was not the administration, but their own former idol, who surrendered the just results of their terrible sacrifices and closed the great fight as a drawn battle, when, had he thrown Porter's corps of fresh men and other available troops upon Lee's army, he would inevitably have driven it in disorder to the river and captured most of it before sunset."

When we parted, Mr. Lincoln had not said in direct terms that it was his purpose to relieve McClellan; he had, however, discussed the relative availability of certain generals for the command, and the tenor of his remarks justi-

fied me in saying to some of my fellow-citizens, on my return to Philadelphia, that McClellan's military career had practically ended, and that he would soon be succeeded in command by Hooker or Burnside. At Warrenton, Va., on the 7th of November, Geo. B. McClellan received an order to turn his command over to General Burnside, and report to the Department by letter from Trenton, New Jersey, by a prompt compliance with which order he closed his inglorious military career.

Under a sense of obligation to the truth of history, and to the memory of two men who, while bearing the burdens of the grandest of civil wars, admitted me to their confidence and such intimate relations as enabled me to see, in their example, with how single an eye to the good of their country men may devote their lives, have I thus endeavored to discharge a solemn duty.

APPENDIX.

While compiling the foregoing vindication of President Lincoln and Mr. Stanton, I dictated an article for a volume which will shortly appear under the title of "Reminiscences of Abraham Lincoln by Men Who Knew Him," in which I embodied vivid and, in several instances, oft-repeated recollections of interviews with Mr. Lincoln. Of these, one was with a deputation of Progressive Friends, and another with Prof. Goldwin Smith, both of which were published in the *New York Tribune* and other papers. To my account of the interview with the Friends Mr. Oliver Johnson took exception, and in a letter to the *Tribune* criticised it sharply and denied its allegations. The confidence with which Mr. Johnson disputed my statements demanded a reply, which I submitted through the columns of the *Tribune*. As the historical facts, by reference to which I make good my disputed assertions, might well have been incorporated in the original text,—and as the volume has not yet gone through the press,—I herewith append the letter to the *Tribune* in which they were embodied.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE *Tribune*.

SIR :—In the *Tribune* of September 6th is a communication from Oliver Johnson, which would have received earlier attention had I not been enjoying needed rest in the health-giving

valley of the Genesee, and away from books, papers, and correspondence. It purports to correct my account of the interview of the Progressive Friends with Mr. Lincoln, and closes with the remark "that if the *Tribune* 'Reminiscences of Lincoln' are to take a permanent form in our literature Mr. Kelley's contribution will need to be carefully expurgated and reconstructed."

As the *Tribune* has said that too much light cannot be thrown on that important matter—Mr. Lincoln's attitude toward the Abolitionists before he emancipated the slaves,—you will, I doubt not, give me space in which to show that it is Mr. Johnson who is in error on that point. He says I "was unable to give the name of the religious body which the deputation represented, and could only describe it vaguely as an 'independent organization'; that it was the Pennsylvania Yearly Meeting of Progressive Friends which the deputation represented; that the object was not, as I had said, to present a Minute, but a formal and solemn Memorial, to the President; and that I appear not to have recollected the name of a single member of the deputation."

It happens that although the gentleman who acted as my amanuensis at the time I dictated the article under consideration has resided in Virginia for more than sixty days, and had, before leaving, destroyed much rejected manuscript, I find among my papers a number of pages of his first draft, from one of which I quote as follows: "It was, I believe, during 1852 that there was organized at Longwood, Chester County, Pa., a religious society to be known as Progressive Friends, to consist of men and women who attached higher importance to purity of life and unselfish conduct than to creeds and dogmas. That the observance of the Sabbath should be maintained by this sect without a creed, and church without a preacher, a meeting-house was erected in which a hymn is sung on each First Day, after which earnest men and women may deliver to assembled Friends communications on

questions of duty with which they may believe themselves to be charged. Here the yearly meeting of the Society is held in June, the most delightful part of the year, in that region of beautiful grass and foliage and flowers. John G. Whittier, Lucretia Mott, William Lloyd Garrison, Wendell Phillips, Frederick Douglass, Dr. William Elder, George William Curtis, Henry Wilson, and scores of distinguished Liberals have participated in these thoughtful anniversaries."

I find, too, that I named Oliver Johnson as the person who read the Minute to the President; and I aver that I vividly remembered the names of four of the six delegates whom he mentions.

Mr. Johnson and others may ask why, if all this and much more on the same subject was written, did none of it appear in the article as printed? The reason was that the object of my paper was to present, in compliance with the request of the person who invited me to do the work, facts illustrative of Mr. Lincoln's character. "It is not," said he, "for impressions of his character, for but incidents illustrative thereof, that we ask"; and while I deemed the interview under consideration an eminently characteristic incident, I feared that if I printed what I had dictated, the article might be regarded as a reminiscence of Progressive Friends, and not of Mr. Lincoln. I therefore struck out what related solely to the Society and its members, and thus furnished Mr. Johnson ground for his erroneous conclusion that my recollection of the occasion was "of a very shadowy kind."

One fact I did not remember: it was the day of the month on which the interview occurred; but, in the absence of that knowledge and while believing it to have been much earlier in the month, I was able to say, from the President's appearance and manner when we entered the room, "that the visit was inopportune. The air was full of evil rumors from the Peninsula, and the President had evidently passed a night of anxiety"; to which I added, "that the guests, who were strangers to the

President, did not perceive, as those familiar with him did, that there was an unusual air of impatience in his manner."

If offence were given to the Society, or its representatives, by my use of the word Minute instead of Memorial, it was the result of conscientious effort on my part to use the appropriate word. Halting between Testimony, Memorial, and Communication, I went to the office of a number of Quaker lawyers, and, telling them that I had prepared a paper on the "Progressive Friends at the White House," asked for the proper word to use in describing the scroll on which the views, formally expressed by the Yearly Meeting, were embodied. I was told that Friendly parlance required the use of the word Minute; as the representatives had borne to the President a certified Minute that a Memorial in the words presented had been formally adopted by the Society.

I have not said, as Mr. Johnson says I seem to think, "that the visit was an impertinence"; what I did say was that "it was inopportune," to which I now add that, containing as the Memorial did, a direct intimation to the President that the Progressive Friends regarded him as faithless to promises he had made when seeking the Presidential office, it could not have been otherwise than offensive to him.

Mr. Johnson will pardon me for saying, as I do with entire respect, that I believe him to have been the author of the report to the *Tribune*, which he cites against me with so much confidence. He was an experienced newspaper man, and had previously given the *Tribune* the benefit of his experience and ability, and there is abundant evidence in the report that it was prepared by one of the delegates, among whom he was the only newspaper man. If in examining the columns of the *Tribune* for the extract he quoted, Mr. Johnson had read the telegrams from Washington and the vicinity of McClellan's head-quarters for the week which terminated with the day on which the report appeared, he would have wondered that the President could have given ear to any thing that did not relate to the

imminent business of the hour. In this sense the Memorial of the Progressive Friends, telling him what blessings would immediately flow from a proclamation of emancipation, and that in default of the issue of such a proclamation the Friends had "fearful reason to apprehend that blood will continue to flow, and fierce dissensions to abound, and calamities to increase, and fiery judgments to be poured out, until the work of national destruction is consummated beyond hope of recovery," could not fail to have been regarded by him as inopportune and impertinent to the hour.

The examination of the columns of the *Tribune* for that single week would have reminded Mr. Johnson that the battle of Fair Oaks had been fought, and have shown him that, with an oppressive summer temperature prevailing, our sick and wounded soldiers from that and other fields were festering in the sun around what would have been comfortable quarters for a hospital, in the midst of green fields and under the shade of umbrageous trees, which, because the property belonged to a Confederate officer, Lieutenant Lee, was guarded by Union soldiers against them and the medical staff of the army; and that when, to escape one of the violent summer gusts that characterize that malarial portion of our country, bluff Ben. Wade and a party of Senators sought shelter under the roof of the broad porticos, or, what in the South are called the "galleries" of a luxurious mansion, bayonets in the hands of Union soldiers repelled them. The property belonged to a rebel, who was then serving as an officer in the Confederate army, and loyal citizens could therefore not be admitted within the enclosure even for shelter from a passing summer gust. When the Senatorial party found Gen. Sumner, who was in immediate command, and complained to him of the exhaustion of our men by compelling them to protect the property of those who were in arms against them, the reply was: "Gentlemen, you must not hold me responsible. I am not General-in-Chief, and must, within my lines, enforce the orders of my superior officer."

As part of that week's history Mr. Johnson would also have learned that, while the President had reason to expect news of a vigorous advance of our army, the rebel Colonel Stewart, with a single regiment of cavalry and four pieces of mounted artillery, had raided through our lines to our base of supplies, the White House. A subdued account of this discouraging incident is thus given in General McClellan's final report of the Peninsular Campaign, under date of August 4, 1863 :

"On the 13th of June two squadrons of the Fifth U. S. cavalry, under command of Captain Royall, stationed near Hanover Old Church, were attacked and overpowered by a force of the enemy's cavalry, numbering about fifteen hundred men, with four guns. They pushed on towards our depots, but at some distance from our main line, and, though pursued, *very cleverly made the circuit of the army, repassing the Chickahominy at Long Bridge.* The burning of two schooners laden with forage, and fourteen government wagons ; the destruction of some sutlers' stores, the killing of several of the guard and teamsters at Garlick's Landing, some little damage done at Tunstall's Station, and a little *eclat*, were the precise results of this expedition."

This official account had not reached the President on the 20th of June, 1862, but the *Tribune* had, and in addition to the information the General's report would subsequently furnish had told him that by the light of blazing schooners, forage, army wagons, and sutlers' stores, the raiders had been able to select from our hospitals needed medical supplies and stores generally for the Confederate army.

While Confederate troops were permitted to thus forage upon us, and destroy our forces in detail, the country was crying, "On to Richmond !" The President, in response to the popular appeal, was begging the General to advance, and McClellan and his trusted lieutenants were appealing to the troops against Lincoln and Stanton for alleged interference with his management of the army. Prominent among the evil

reports to which I referred, was the alarming one that large bodies of the troops under McClellan, with their officers, had been so prejudiced against the President, by their commander and his personal adherents as to threaten resignation by officers and revolt in the ranks, if colored troops were enlisted or radical views on the subject of slavery were declared. These reports came daily to the President ; nor were they idle rumors, for in less than three weeks after the interview under consideration, McClellan's seditious letter of July 7th, to the President, from the gunboat on which he had sought shelter from the dangers of battle, was made public, with its bold avowal that "a declaration of radical views, especially upon slavery, will rapidly disintegrate our present armies."

In view of these few straggling facts it will not be believed that I was mistaken when I said, "there was that in the President's manner which showed that the visit was inopportune."

Mr. Lincoln was mortal ; he was, in my judgment, by far the greatest man our country has produced : yet he was mortal, and yearned, above all things, for the final approval of mankind. When his self-respect would permit it, he complained—and justly—to the inner circle of his friends of the wounds the Abolitionists as a body delighted to inflict upon him. It was as an Abolitionist that my revered friend, Dr. Furness, put into the mouth of scoffers, as a proverb, the saying, "The President would like to have God on his side, but he must have Kentucky." It was as an Abolitionist that Wendell Phillips spoke of him as "a mosaic of slavery and freedom—a man who had never walked a straight line in his life." And it was as Abolitionists that the Progressive Friends called on him ; and when, in listening to their deliberately prepared address, he found that by the use of an imperfect quotation from an address delivered years before his nomination for the Presidency, his attitude on the question of slavery was changed, the qualifications with which he had defined it omitted, and his veracity impugned, he replied with an asperity of manner of which I had not deemed him capable.

From Mr. Johnson's report to the *Tribune* I quote the following extract from the Memorial : "That in his speech, delivered at *Springfield before his election to the office of Chief Magistrate*, the President expressly declared that 'a house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe that this government cannot permanently endure half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved ; I do not expect the House to fall, but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all the one thing or all the other.' " Mr. Lincoln's first duty to himself seemed to him to be to repel the intimation that this extract was part of a campaign speech, made while he was a candidate for the Presidency, and he did it with emphasis, for, straightening himself to his full height, and, I repeat, with an asperity of manner quite unusual with him, he said : " It is true that on the 17th of *June*, 1858, I said : ' I believe that this government cannot permanently endure half slave and half free,' but I said it in connection with other things from which it should not have been separated in an address discussing moral obligations. What I did say was this : '*If we could first know where we are, and whither we are tending, we could better judge what to do and how to do it.* We are far into the fifth year since a policy was initiated with the avowed object and confident promise of putting an end to the slavery agitation. Under the operation of that policy that agitation has not only not ceased, but is constantly augmented. In my opinion it will not cease until a crisis shall have been reached and passed. A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe that this government cannot permanently endure half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved ; I do not expect the House to fall, but I do expect that it will cease to be divided. It will become all the one thing or all the other. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate extinction, or its advocates will push it forward till it shall be-

come alike lawful in all the States,—old as well as new, North as well as South.” And Mr. Johnson tells us that he added : “ The sentiments contained in that passage were deliberately uttered, and I hold them now.”

Mr. Johnson is as unfair to the President in this communication as Mr. Lincoln felt the Progressive Friends in Yearly Meeting assembled had been. For instance, he says that the “ alleged disjointed quotation from Mr. Lincoln’s Springfield speech had appeared a thousand times in exactly the same shape, and was made in perfect good faith.” Does that prove that each time Mr. Lincoln had heard it from the lips of professed friends he had not been grieved by it ? Again he says : “ *Mr. Lincoln naturally desired to turn its point so far as to make it seem that it was not incompatible with his conscientious delay to strike off the shackles of the slaves.*” Do honest and truthful men strive to turn the point of their important utterances when responsibility arises ? and does not Mr. Johnson in this remark admit that their Memorial was intended to tell Abraham Lincoln that the Progressive Friends held him false and derelict ? Mr. Lincoln sought to repel this covert imputation upon his integrity and veracity ; and if Mr. Johnson’s report may be relied upon, ridiculed their prayer by saying : “ If a decree of emancipation could abolish slavery, John Brown would have done it effectually. Such a decree would not be more binding upon the South than the Constitution, and that cannot be enforced in that part of the country now. Would a proclamation of freedom be any more effective ? ” But further, after Mr. Barnard had addressed the President—a fact which I had failed to note,—Mr. Johnson tells us the President said, “ he had sometimes thought that perhaps he might be an instrument in God’s hands of accomplishing a good work, and he certainly was not unwilling to be,” and added : “ Perhaps, however, God’s way of accomplishing the end which the Memorialists had in view might be different from theirs,” a dash of that quiet sarcasm of which he was so complete a master.

Whatever Mr. Lincoln's personal convictions or aspirations may have been on that 20th of June, he was not a free agent ; he had to choose between challenging the execution of the threats which came from the neighborhood of McClellan's head-quarters, that to take such a step as the Progressive Friends prayed for would disintegrate the army, and declining to grant the sentimental prayer of these well-meaning but inexperienced Memorialists.

With a degree of what Mr. Lincoln once in my hearing spoke of as the "self-righteousness of the Abolitionists," Mr. Johnson says that "the President, at that very moment, was more than half persuaded that the Abolitionists were right, and waited only for the growth of the public sentiment that would justify him in doing what they desired." To one who had familiar access to Abraham Lincoln, who had studied him,—his experiences, his character, his purposes,—the arrogance of this sentence is little less than sublime.

I have known men who were intimate with Mr. Lincoln at all the varied periods of his life,—through all the struggles of his early years and the trials and triumphs of his eventful manhood, and have questioned many of them as to whether at any time in his life he had indulged in profanity, and have been unable to hear of his having used an expression that might be regarded as profane in the course of his whole life. It is well authenticated that he did once, with much emphasis, invoke the name of the Almighty. It was not, however, profanely, but to register in heaven a vow while yet in the twenty-second year of his age, that controlled him throughout the whole of his wonderful life. He was in New Orleans with his friend John Hanks ; they had seen a sale of slaves. The feature that most impressed young Lincoln was the sight of one of the unhappy ones, "a beautiful mulatto girl." "She was," as Mr. Hanks puts it, "felt over, pinched, and trotted around to show bidders that 'said article was sound, etc.'" Lincoln walked away from the sad inhuman sight with a deep

feeling of "unsmotherable hate," and then turning to John Hanks, said: "By God, if I ever get a chance to hit that institution, I will hit it hard, John," and in that blessed year, 1831, Abraham Lincoln was filled with convictions on the subject of slavery that made him forever feel that a man who warred on "that institution" was right in his object, though he might err in his methods, as on the 20th of June, 1862, he believed the Progressive Friends were urging him to do.

How wofully the friends had exaggerated the power of such a proclamation as they prayed the President to issue, is well shown in the reminiscences of Moncure D. Conway, published on August 30th, in which he tells of the interview between the President, Senator Wilson, Wendell Phillips, Francis W. Bird, Elizur Wright, J. H. Stephenson, G. L. Stearns, Oakes Ames, and himself, which occurred on the 24th of January, 1863. The object of this delegation was to complain of the failure of the Emancipation Proclamation, and Mr. Phillips, as its spokesman, hinted that "the Northern people, now generally anti-slavery, were not satisfied that it was being honestly carried out by the nation's agents and generals in the South." The President said he "had not expected much from it at first, and, consequently, had not been disappointed," and gave it as his impression that "the masses of the country generally are only dissatisfied at our lack of military successes." He did not hesitate in the course of the interview with these distinguished men to say that "most of us here present have been nearly all our lives working in minorities, and many have got into a *habit of being dissatisfied*"; and when this conclusion was deprecated, he added: "At any rate, it has been very rare that an opportunity of running this administration has been lost." And when Mr. Phillips patronizingly said: "If we see this administration earnestly working to free the country from slavery and its rebellion, we will show you how we can run it in another four years of power," to which, possibly remembering Mr. Phillips' description of him as a mosaic and a "man

who had never walked a straight line in his life," Mr. Lincoln said: "Oh, Mr. Phillips, I have ceased to have any personal feeling or expectation in that matter,—I don't say I never had any,—*so abused and borne upon as I have been*"; and Mr. Conway tells us that his last utterance to the délegation as it left him was: "I must bear this load which the country has entrusted to me as well as I can, and do my best."

For one correction of my statement I must ask space to thank Mr. Johnson. I interwove with the interview now under consideration, an incident that occurred a few days later with a member of the Society of Hicksite Friends. The prayer of the lady was identical with that of the Progressive Friends, and Mr. Lincoln's treatment of the case was so much like that he gave their application, that in referring to the two incidents, as I have had frequent occasion to do, they had become blended in my memory.

WM. D. KELLEY.

THE ELMS, Philadelphia, *Sept.* 23, 1885.

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